

MEMPHIS  
DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA  
1900-1917



Edward Hull Crump  
Mayor of Memphis, 1910-1915

# *Memphis*

DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

1900—1917

*BY*

WILLIAM D. MILLER

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THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS : MEMPHIS

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THE AMERICAN HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER : MADISON

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Manufactured in the United States of America

By American Book-Stratford Press, Inc., New York



TO RHEA

## *Preface*

SENATOR ROBERT M. LAFOLLETTE once observed that he did not know "of any progressive sentiment or any progressive legislation in the South."<sup>1</sup> Since then historians have shown that he was wrong and have demonstrated that there was a progressive movement in the South. The historians, however, disagree over what, precisely, progressivism was, and they likely will continue to disagree, for it is impossible to define it precisely. The movement was thoroughly pragmatic and therefore incapable of being systematized. It can be characterized only loosely, and one would hardly go further than to say it was a reaction of conscience to the injustices that came with the industrialization of American life. It was a humanistic movement, whose leaders believed that man was essentially good, that if he were freed from special injustice and from the dehumanizing pressures of the industrial city, he would flourish and real progress, that vague goal of the movement, would be made.

By this definition, Memphis between the turn of the century and the first World War had a progressive movement, a localized manifestation of the national one. While its leaders in Memphis never called it by this name, rather calling it a "reform" movement, it nonetheless followed closely the pattern of progressivism as it was being laid down on the national scene.

But progressivism was not the only theme of the history of Memphis of this period, which is known as the progressive era.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 371.

Evidences of social disorganization were as apparent as those of social progress. Memphis was almost unique among American cities for the extensiveness of its crime. In trying to fathom this side of the city's history I have found especially helpful a theory worked out by two social scientists, W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*.<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Znaniecki sought to understand the migration of Polish peasants to America in terms of two concepts: the subjective *attitudes* of the peasants and the objective *values*, or generally accepted ways and beliefs, of the community. As the Polish peasants settled in America they had to adjust their old world attitudes to the new world values. This process was so difficult it often resulted in the disorganization of the individuals' personalities or of their social groups.

Memphis experienced an immigration during this period of its history—that of many rural Southerners into the growing industrial city. The experiences of these rural immigrants were similar to those of the Polish peasants, and a similar social disorganization resulted in Memphis as the newcomers struggled to adjust to the values of an industrialized urban society. The clash of their old Southern rural attitudes with urban values is a second and major theme of this history, which viewed in the light of the Thomas and Znaniecki thesis affords a partial understanding of one of the basic problems faced by Memphis in the progressive era—that of lawlessness.

In this undertaking I have received help from many sources and it is a pleasure to acknowledge at least some of them. A grant from the Henry M. and Lena Meyer Kahn Trust Fund enabled me to reduce my teaching load during the preparation of this book. Miss Phyllis O'Callaghan of Memphis spent many days in proofreading and rechecking sources, and I am grateful to her for the faithfulness with which she did this

<sup>2</sup> First published in New York, 1918–1920.

work. Miss Mary Davant, Miss Blanche McKeown, and Mr. Carey Moore of Cossitt Library were efficient and gracious with the considerable time they gave in locating materials. Professor J. Carlyle Sitterson of the University of North Carolina supervised the initial preparation of the manuscript and made many constructive suggestions. Mr. William E. Rowley of Altamont, New York, has in his capacity of editorial advisor worked patiently and ably with me far beyond the normal requirements of his task.

The person who has helped me more than anyone else is my wife, Rhea Bond Miller, who assisted by giving her time to a more important job—that of mothering five children.

WILLIAM D. MILLER  
*Marquette University*

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*Credits:* The photographs of Main and Madison and the portraits of Sam Carnes and E. H. Crump were made available by the courtesy of *The Commercial Appeal*. The portraits of J. J. Williams, Walker Wellford, and James Malone were loaned by the Cossitt Library, Memphis. The maps were made by William Smith, Memphis.

MEMPHIS  
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## CHAPTER ONE

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### *The New City*

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON of September 27, 1900, the Memphis *Evening Scimitar* proclaimed in a banner headline that the population of Memphis was 102,320.<sup>1</sup> This information, just received from the Bureau of the Census in Washington, was news indeed, for by having exceeded the hundred thousand mark Memphis was no longer a river town, but a city—a metropolis. Moreover, the census report revealed other facts almost as dramatic. In 1890, with a population of 64,495, Memphis had been forty-second in rank among the nation's cities, and in the South had been surpassed by Atlanta, Nashville, Richmond, New Orleans, and St. Louis. In 1900 only New Orleans and St. Louis had populations that exceeded the Bluff City's. And the 58.6 per cent increase in population that Memphis had shown since 1890 was greater than that of any Southern city except Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>2</sup> It was a golden moment in the history of the city. The *Scimitar*, in an expansive mood at having "scooped" the morning *Commercial Appeal*, called upon the people to celebrate that evening with a parade and bonfires and grandly stated that it would furnish the necessary brass band.



Perhaps to a few members of the populace it appeared strange that such exultation should result from the mere fact of population growth, and that size in itself should be taken as a sign of progress. If such there were, they doubtless belonged to an older generation that did not comprehend the promise of the twentieth century. The marvelous scientific developments of the nineteenth century had placed at the disposal of the new century the means of creating an exciting new society—almost a heaven on earth. Indeed, the prospects of this earthly paradise were so much more tangible than the one that lay beyond the grave that most Memphians, in keeping with the predominant mood, preferred to concentrate on the matter at hand.<sup>3</sup> During the eighties and nineties, the old river boat town, cotton emporium and pleasure center, began to feel the pulse of the new dynamic—the machine. By 1900 the growth of industry was everywhere apparent, transforming the physical appearance and life of the city. When the president of the Merchants Exchange was queried concerning the implications of the great growth in population his answer was characteristic. It would, he said, act as “a most exciting stimulant” to the business activity of the city.<sup>4</sup>

If the people of Memphis reflected a typical American mood in placing their hope for the twentieth century in its promise of material blessings, they were just as typically American in clinging to their more traditional values. The gigantic strides being made in science may have caused a few to become skeptical of the old time religion, but for most, the old certitudes still existed to give life structure and meaning. God ruled as always, and in His perfect wisdom had arranged that the material promise of the twentieth century should be effected through one's own race, nation, and section. For the average person the future was not only promising, but its promise was dependent upon the perpetuation of his particular way of life. Thus, expectations for the future became colored with a sense of destiny. For the

moment, at least, the twentieth century nourished optimism and provided life with excitement and color.

On occasions when men look to the future it is customary for them to take stock of the past. As Memphians surveyed their future, they might well have added to their celebration a sober examination of the foundations on which this future was to be constructed.

Ideally, a city serves as a repository for the cultural heritage of an age and of a region. As it matures it tends to reject the bad and preserve the good and at the same time to reach farther afield for the enrichment of the heritage it embodies.<sup>5</sup> Memphis was an old Southern city, but it was not mature in this sense and it was provincial. Its growth had been marred by two episodes in its history, Reconstruction and the yellow fever epidemic of 1878-1879.

Before the Civil War, a gentry of planters and business and professional people had introduced some culture into the city's life, while the immigration of foreign peoples, especially the Germans, brought worthwhile elements of their European heritage. This cultural promise was not seriously hurt by the Civil War, which did little physical or economic damage to Memphis. The war brought no extensive military action to the city; the "Battle of Memphis" was only a short-lived naval engagement on the Mississippi that ended with a federal brigade taking possession of the city. During its occupation, Memphis succeeded in maintaining trade and communication with the lower South, and served as an entrepôt for most of the contraband trade between the North and the South. Even cotton, despite efforts of the Confederate government to suppress trade in this commodity, continued to play a significant role in the city's economic life. It is Gerald Capers' conclusion that "few southern towns suffered as little from the four years of war as did Memphis."<sup>6</sup>

Reconstruction, however, brought conditions that, to use a phrase of Capers again, "accentuated all of the vicious charac-

teristics of Memphis.”<sup>7</sup> Into the unsettled city there came large numbers of freedmen. The Negro population of Memphis, which in 1860 had numbered 3,882, increased with such rapidity during the post-war years that by 1870 it amounted to 15,471.<sup>8</sup> As it did throughout the South, Reconstruction in Memphis provoked the defense mechanism of exalting ideals of the Old South. With the entrance of the Negro into an atmosphere charged with political and economic confusion, the ideal of white supremacy was invoked by the city’s lower classes as a means of preserving their social and economic status. This ideal, which in the Old South had rested on the socially stabilizing institution of slavery, was reduced, through Reconstruction and the free status of the Negro, to a dependence on hostility for its perpetuation. Racial antagonism reached a lurid climax in 1866 when members of the laboring class indulged in a two-day orgy of rioting that resulted in the killing of forty-four Negroes and the destruction of much property.<sup>9</sup>

The free Negro was only one of the problems that plagued the city during the Reconstruction period. Notorious for its political corruption before the war, Memphis reached a new low when local Radicals secured control of the city government. The wholesale robbing of the public treasury resulted in a deterioration of the quality of city services, while crime, vice, filth, and disease flourished. An English press correspondent who visited Memphis during these years expressed his impression of the city in a couplet:

I wonder why they gave it such a name of old renown  
This dreary, dismal, muddy, melancholy town.<sup>10</sup>

Yet even with Reconstruction, Memphis in the seventies still had humanizing elements in its culture. The foreign born, notably the Germans, engaged in activities that today seem startlingly incongruous with the main stream of the city’s life. One could hear the songs of Haydn and Schubert sung by a *Maen-*

*nerchor*, while trade unionism and new currents of thought were discussed and frequently espoused in the several newspapers published by the Germans. The Irish, the largest of the foreign born groups, were not so intellectual as the Germans, but they helped to broaden the city's cultural base. They, and some of the Germans, remained staunchly loyal to the Catholic faith, thus helping to moderate a fervid religiosity of the frontier type which had been brought into the city.

Except for the socially unsettling addition of Negroes to the city's population, Reconstruction did not permanently disturb the stability of Memphis society. The yellow fever epidemic of 1878-1879, however, tended to weaken the elements of the nineteenth century population that could best have transmitted the city's cultural heritage into the twentieth century. With the outbreak of the epidemic many with sufficient wealth left the city and a number of these probably decided that the risk of future epidemics was reason enough to remain away permanently.<sup>11</sup> In this category, especially, could be found the Germans, large numbers of them taking up a permanent abode in St. Louis.<sup>12</sup> As for the Irish, they were too poor to leave, and the extent to which they were reduced in numbers by the epidemic is suggested by the fact that of the eight thousand who died, nearly half were Catholic.<sup>13</sup> A rough idea of what the epidemic did to those peoples whose cultural heritage was European can be gathered from the fact that, in 1860, 37 per cent of the city's population was of foreign origin, while by 1900 both the foreign born and those natives whose parents were foreign born amounted to only 15 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

But more significant in determining the character of twentieth century Memphis was the swelling tide of immigrants from the countryside, white and Negro, who came into the city during the two decades following the epidemic. It is likely that between fifty and sixty thousand, attracted by the city's expanding economy, poured into Memphis during this era.<sup>15</sup> That

these people were mostly rural in origin can hardly be doubted, since evidences in Memphis culture so strongly suggest it, and since there existed everywhere throughout the South during this era a prevailing pattern of migration from farm to city.

Under such conditions, the pre-epidemic part of the city's population, the bearers and preservers of the city's cultural heritage, became a minority, outnumbered by the newcomers from the country. The newcomers still spoke in rural colloquialisms, attended to one another's business with a good-neighborly interest, and accepted the tragedy and pathos of life with a resignation sustained by the strength of their old-time religion.

The problem for these newcomers was essentially one of discarding a rural way of life and adopting an urban one. In the city a different conception of what constituted the "good" life confronted them, values that derived from the intense competitive struggle for material gain that had come to be the compelling dynamic in American urban society. Yet few of the rural immigrants could realize the "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous leisure" ideals of the twentieth century city. Industrialization demanded an urban proletariat, a class from which few rose. The countryman turned city worker had no recourse. His rural religion, still close to the spirit of the frontier, was good for working up a sweaty emotionalism, but it did not place his immediate social and economic problems in any kind of rational perspective with the everlasting values which he piously affirmed. Nor could he give himself to social movements that offered the hope of bettering his lot materially. His ingrained rural conservatism precluded a subscription to working class causes.

This conflict of the rural mind with city values possibly helps to explain one predominant aspect of the character of early twentieth century Memphis. Many of the newcomers found it impossible to make a quick and easy adjustment to the system of urban values. Their personalities and their social behavior

became disorganized, and the life of the city was torn by crime and violence.<sup>16</sup>

This disorganization and violence formed one major theme of the history of Memphis society between 1900 and 1917. But it challenged as well as conditioned the growing city. A challenge evokes a response, and as important as the city's social disorganization were the efforts that were made for a more healthy and integrated society through the channels of the progressive movement. These efforts form the counter-theme of the city's history during this era.

The reform movement that swept over the United States between the turn of the century and the first World War was a reaction to the social evils that industrialization and its values had imposed on cities. Intellectually, the movement expressed the assumption that progress was synonymous with the increasing amounts of energy being made available to man by the machine. The problem was how to direct this energy into socially purposeful channels.

Social Darwinism, so popular as a way of thinking during the late nineteenth century, had scorned reform efforts as heresy to the hard and fast doctrine of the survival of the fittest. This doctrine, however, was broken down by the winds of pragmatism which rejected all fixed doctrines, including that of Social Darwinism. Thus the reforming impulse was made intellectually respectable again, and a climate of opinion was created that made the progressive movement possible.

The reforming impulse, however, required more than an intellectual justification; it needed popularization, and this was the work of a number of writers who brought some of the more unwholesome aspects of American society to the attention of the American conscience. Some writers, such as Henry George, Herbert Croly, and Lincoln Steffens, combined a thoughtful criticism of American society with proposals for its betterment. But much of the literature that popularized the causes of pro-

gressivism amounted to a kind of reveling in sensation for the sake of sensation and was productive of only an emotional froth. This, perhaps, was symptomatic of the unwillingness of the masses to think. They preferred a crusade in which the knights were easily distinguishable from their wicked enemies.

In Memphis, the ideas of progressivism, brought into the city in books, magazines, and by lectures, fell on fertile ground. The industrialization of the city that had begun during the eighties played its part in creating a reform sentiment by intensifying the social problems traditionally associated with urban life and by creating new ones. When Jacob Riis spoke in Memphis on the need for wholesome environmental conditions for children, his listeners were as alive to the problem as those of a New York audience, for the problem was compounded of the same factors in both cities. In 1907, Woodrow Wilson, then president of Princeton University, spoke in the Goodwyn Institute in Memphis on political morality, emphasizing the need for a legal control of social evils caused by big business.<sup>17</sup> His ideas had as much pertinence as they would have had in any typical Eastern city.

Indeed, in the years before the first World War Memphis provided many audiences for speakers expressing formulas for social reform. Even advocates of socialism received attention. In 1904 Eugene V. Debs spoke in the Lyceum Theatre, and four years later William D. Haywood, leader of the radical Industrial Workers of the World, lectured to "nearly a thousand" in Germania Hall.<sup>18</sup> Christian socialism had its expositor in the Reverend Ellis Carr, who gave a series of lectures before the Business Men's Club.<sup>19</sup> Another formula for reform that enjoyed a vogue in the city was Henry George's single tax theory. In 1913 Joseph Fels, a wealthy soap manufacturer, came to Memphis preaching the single tax doctrine. Fels offered to match dollar for dollar any amount which local single taxers might raise to further the cause.<sup>20</sup> The following year a number

of business and professional men, among them Judge A. B. Pittman of the Circuit Court, Alex Y. Scott, a lawyer, and Dr. W. D. Gaither, took up the work by organizing the Memphis Single Tax Association.<sup>21</sup>

Locally, the most thoughtful expressions of progressive ideas were found in the editorials of the *Commercial Appeal* which, despite the trend toward newspaper consolidation and "canned" news, maintained an independence and vigor that was reminiscent of an earlier day in American journalism. Under the editorship of Charles Patrick Joseph Mooney it never hesitated to take a stand on a controversial issue, and it took few pains to spare the sensibilities or prejudices of any group of its readers. While the *Commercial Appeal* was regarded as conservative, its conservatism resulted mostly from a distaste for much of the buncombe and self-seeking that went under the guise of reform. The stands it took were often liberal, and it resisted, in Jeffersonian fashion, programs that appealed to emotion rather than reason and that seemed aimed at confusing the public.<sup>22</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal* enlightened the public on the currents of progressive theory as they swept into the city. In 1911 it informed its readers they no longer needed to take seriously that preacher of Social Darwinism, Herbert Spencer. He was a passing vogue. Progress, the paper declared, could not be made dependent on the "philosophy of evolution as applied to the problems of the . . . world."<sup>23</sup> Andrew Carnegie's "gospel of wealth" was dispatched with satire, while Henry Demarest Lloyd's popular attack on the Standard Oil Company, *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, was spoken of as being "very near . . . the greatest book ever written by any American."<sup>24</sup> In the increasing concern for reform that was being manifested throughout the nation, the *Commercial Appeal* saw a certain sign that the millenium was at hand. "Humanity will struggle on," it proclaimed, "until all evil things are abolished on this earth. Just as sure as the stars swing in the heavens there will be . . .



an era of absolute peace between men, and absolute justice between man and man.”<sup>25</sup>

When the *Commercial Appeal* spoke of a reform spirit, it referred only to that spirit generated within America's urban-industrial complex. It never espoused the causes and slogans of populism. Indeed, where William Jennings Bryan was concerned, the paper frequently endeavored “to point out the error which the [Democratic] party nationally made in abandoning its natural allies in the North and East . . . by affiliating with the Populist West . . . and permitting itself to be dominated by the spectacular Western extravaganza.”<sup>26</sup> When Bryan sailed for Europe in the fall of 1903, the *Commercial Appeal* commented that “he can stay away forever. He will not be missed.”<sup>27</sup>

The manner in which the people of Memphis voted in presidential elections showed that they, too, possessed no great enthusiasm for Bryan. It seems likely that conscious progressives in this traditionally Democratic city preferred Theodore Roosevelt. In the election of 1904, when Alton B. Parker, the Democratic candidate, ran against Roosevelt, the latter managed to receive 1,552 votes compared to 6,265 for Parker.<sup>28</sup> Yet in 1908 when Bryan was the Democratic candidate he received but 3,436 votes, while William Howard Taft, his Republican opponent, won more than 1,700, an accomplishment that may have been due either to a lack of enthusiasm for Bryan or to approval of Taft as the presumed bearer of Roosevelt's policies.<sup>29</sup>

The presidential election of 1912 offered no clear-cut choice on the issue of progressivism. Yet it is likely that for those to whom progressivism had become a faith, Roosevelt was the first apostle. In Memphis the faithful were numerous enough to organize and to enliven the campaign with placards and demonstrations in behalf of their candidate. When Roosevelt was shot in an attempt on his life during the campaign, two hundred progressives gathered at their headquarters in the Rogers Build-

ing to pray for his recovery.<sup>30</sup> In the election Roosevelt received 2,861 votes, more than a thousand more than any previous opponent of a Democratic candidate had received in Memphis. Taft, now an opponent of Roosevelt, won only 574 votes, while Woodrow Wilson, acceptable either as a Democrat or a progressive, won 6,516.<sup>31</sup>

While Memphis progressivism embodied substantially all the major elements of the national movement, it nonetheless possessed a unique character. Reform in Memphis was not only a phase of progressivism, but a phase of the political career of Edward H. Crump. As mayor and as political leader, he emerged as the major figure in this period. He developed the most extensive and tightly controlled political organization Memphis had ever had, at a time when the disorganized character of Memphis society required such an organization for effective political action. And he was a progressive. The reforms effected during his mayoralty were as notable and as permanent as those effected by those more commonly acclaimed progressive heroes, "Golden Rule" Jones of Toledo and Mayor Tom Johnson of Cleveland. The progressive movement would have been a farce and an illusion in Memphis without Crump, for Memphis was a confused city that needed a strong cohesive influence.

Some recent historians have tended to evaluate Southern progressivism on the basis of the attitude of some so-called Southern progressives toward the Negro. Yet to judge it on this basis is to invest the movement with a quality it did not possess. The movement, being pragmatic, subscribed to no transcendent principle of morality that required an examination of conscience regarding the general American tendency to brand the Negro as inferior.

It was the lack of such a principle that was to cause so much of the progressive movement to boil off into an emotional froth. The evaporation would have been more rapid in Memphis if the movement there had not been stiffened by the thorough-

going character of Crump's policies. And the charge that progressivism in the South did nothing to ameliorate socially the condition of the Negro was not altogether true for Memphis. Crump not only refrained from invoking the race issue in his politics, as an unscrupulous demagogue might well have done in this confused period; he insisted, sometimes against opposition, that the Negro share in the social advancements that reform brought to the city.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### *At the Turn of the Century*

WHILE MEMPHIS in 1900 had achieved the dimensions of a metropolis, not even the most earnest civic booster would have asserted that the growth of population had been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the city's physical appearance. The business district, particularly, presented a drab and depressing appearance. In 1900 this area extended back from the river for three blocks and along the river for twelve blocks or more. The effects of the city's expanding economy were felt in the business district in its growth beyond its old bounds of Poplar Street on the north and Beale on the south, while Second was becoming, like Main, a major shopping center.<sup>1</sup> Front Street, unchanged by the vicissitudes of time or fortune, imparted to the whole city the mark of its strong personality. It was a street of wholesale trade, predominantly in cotton—cotton on the sampling tables of shippers, on the sidewalks where samples lay roped up into "snakes," and on the streets in heavily laden drays.

A correspondent of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, after visiting Memphis during this era, described the city to St. Louis readers as being not only "commonplace," but "common."<sup>2</sup> In the busi-

ness district he saw "mostly 4-story brick buildings, old, unpainted, unattractive," while the sidewalks bent up and down, having been built, apparently, without thought for grading. And the city was dirty. The *Commercial Appeal* complained that "There is trash on the sidewalks, and in the streets, and the alleys in the center of the town are choked with empty boxes, tin cans and all sorts of odds and ends."<sup>3</sup> The unkempt appearance of the city was a matter of more than local concern, for in 1906, the *Ladies' Home Journal* published a group of pictures captioned, "Eyesores That Spoil Memphis."<sup>4</sup> Between Front Street and the levee was a bare expanse of land used as a dump for broken-down wagons and used packing boxes, a sight that did not edify the patrons of the adjacent Cossitt Library. There was another dump in the rear of the Grand Opera House, and the banks of the Bayou Gayoso were littered even in the "best section of the city." Two weeks after the publication of the *Journal's* pictures, the *Commercial Appeal* took note and mournfully commented that Main Street was a "horselot" and Memphis generally looked like a "country town."<sup>5</sup>

Contributing to the drab appearance of the city was the abominable condition of the streets. In later years the *Commercial Appeal*, recalling the condition of Memphis streets in 1900, stated that "Main street virtually ceased at Beale on the south and Poplar on the north. There was not a decently paved street in the city. Main was paved with cobblestones. . . . Second street was an avenue of mud and slime. . . . Rotten Nicholson pavement was prevalent nearly everywhere."<sup>6</sup> So bad were the streets that drays hauling cotton to the warehouses on Front Street frequently dropped into holes, and enterprising drivers would contest streetcars for the use of rails to escape breaking an axle or maiming their brutes.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the dismal appearance of the business district, there were buildings to which Memphians could point as marks of the city's progress. Standing above the levee on Front Street

was the public library, an imposing Romanesque structure of red sandstone, and the Federal Building, constructed of white Tennessee marble in the modern Doric style. Back from the river, but still in the business district, were a number of other public buildings that commanded attention: the Lyceum Theatre, the Grand Opera House, the Appeal Building, and the First Methodist and Second Presbyterian churches. Residents of Memphis also could boast of their two skyscrapers, the eight-story Randolph Building on south Main at Beale, and the eleven-story Porter Building on Main near Madison. By 1902 there was a new Gayoso Hotel, replacing the old structure, described as a "rookery," which had burned in the summer of 1899.<sup>8</sup>

It was not until 1906, however, that the business district began to show real evidence of industrial and commercial wealth. In that year a program of both public and commercial building began that continued until the first World War. By 1914 the business district had been transformed; more towering skyscrapers housed business offices, while the dismal and ancient buildings that had served as city hall and police station had been replaced with new and grander ones.

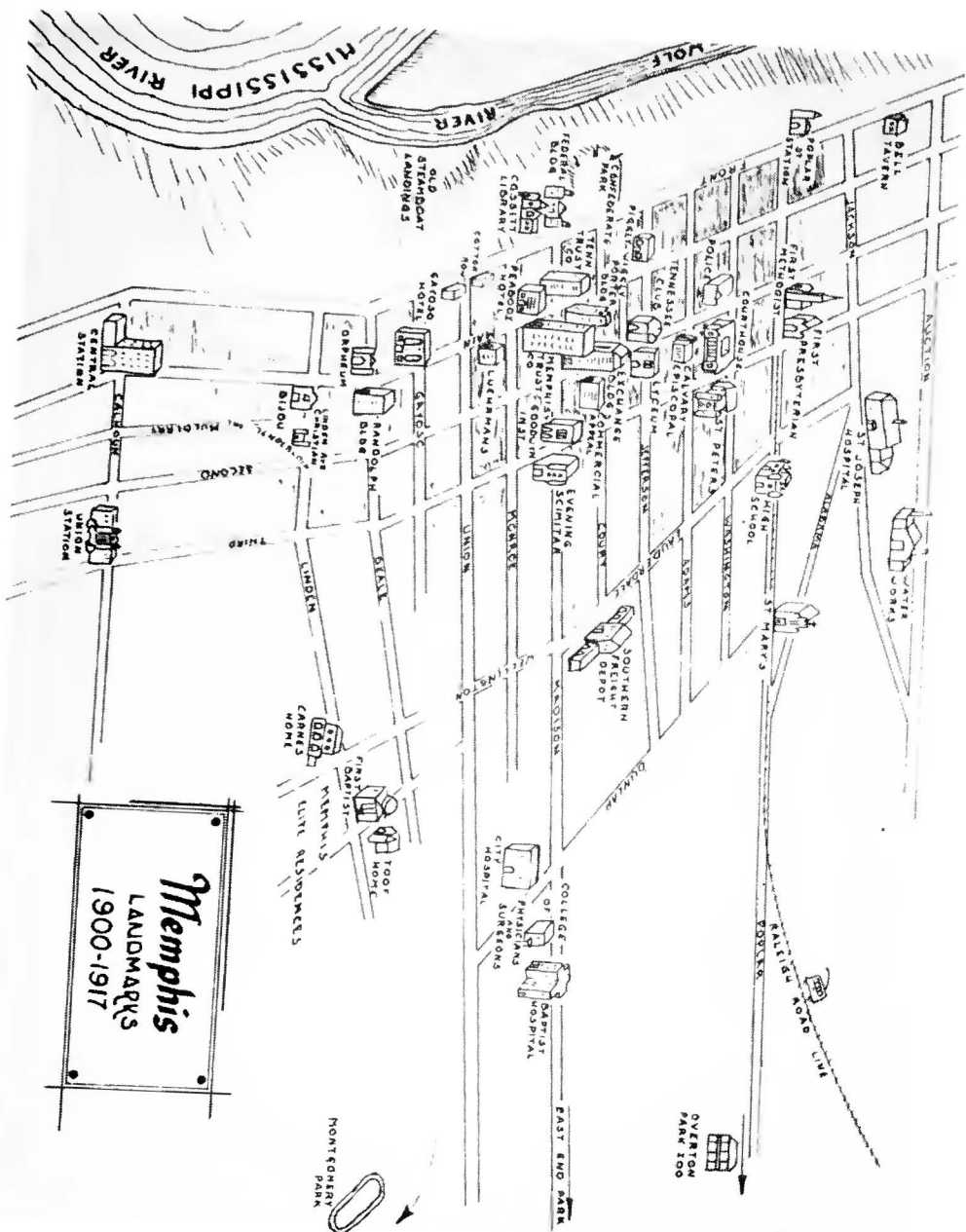
Bespeaking a more gracious phase of Memphis life—a phase that would soon give way to a more hurried age—was Henry Luehrman's restaurant and hotel at the corner of Monroe Avenue and Main Street. Luehrman had come to Memphis with the federal army and remained to start a café. By his firm but tactful insistence on the amenities, but most of all by his excellent cuisine, he had established by the nineties a reputation that was nationwide among travelers. Edwin Booth was a regular visitor; when the racing season was on "everyone came to Luehrman's," and custom required a midnight lunch there after the theater.<sup>9</sup> The group for which Luehrman's held the most pleasant associations, perhaps, was a coterie of writers for the Memphis press. There A. B. Pickett, Fred Brennan, C. P. J.

Mooney, Jim Algee, Mike Connelly, Tom Ashcroft, and Walker Kennedy would "sit out the night," engaged in earnest discussion of current issues, doubtless made more profound and witty by quantities of Luehrman's excellent wines.<sup>10</sup>

Evidences of wealth, if not too conspicuous in the business district and its environs, were abundant in the mansions of the city's masters of capital. Along the fashionable streets and avenues—Shelby, Linden, Waldran, Poplar, Union, and Vance—were garishly ornate structures proclaiming the affluence of their owners. As one contemporary proudly exclaimed: "Here, certainly, you will say, when you behold them, here is wealth and taste exemplified," embodying all "the late architectural ideals, Gothic, Byzantine, Norman, English Castellated, French Renaissance!"<sup>11</sup>

The rapid industrial growth of the city was creating a class of new-rich whose numbers made it impossible for all to find homes on the streets traditionally reserved for the city's economic aristocracy. To accommodate this class, two prominent Memphis realtors, Brinkley Snowden and T. O. Vinton, in 1903 developed Annesdale Park in the Central Avenue area of the expanding eastern edge of the city. The project, styled "the first subdivision of real estate in the South planned upon metropolitan lines," was advertised for its snob appeal.<sup>12</sup> Lots were to be sold only to "selected persons." One could buy a lot only "if his position in society is such that his presence in Annesdale Park will add to its social importance," and buyers were promised that they would live in "the most fashionable and the most exclusive section of the city."

But the homes of the well-to-do were a façade. The fantasy of their architectural types bespoke a lack of aesthetic feeling and of a stable culture. The homes that were more representative of a way of life peculiar to the South were "here and there those survivors of the almost obsolete square-shouldered, broad verandaed, roomy Southern type; singularly aging, indeed,







Main and Madison, 1902

those fast by-going shelters of the diminished and dwindling aristocracy of ante-bellum times.”<sup>13</sup>

The homes of the new aristocracy of wealth reflected the “conspicuous consumption” ideal of their owners. But such affluence, and the graciousness of living that a place like Luehrman’s expressed, were enjoyed by only a small part of the population. The way of life of many people in Memphis was expressed by the rooming-house and tenement districts that grew up on the northern and southern extremities of the business district. Here there were few marks of cultural or material respectability, and the miserable quality of life was reflected in violence, murder, and suicide. Running back from the river at the southern edge of the business district was Gayoso Street, where the business was almost exclusively that of prostitution. Here and throughout the rooming-house districts, dives and saloons thrived. The rooming-house district symbolized the change Memphis was undergoing, as large numbers of rural people, recently come into the city, experienced an erosion of their rural values under urban influence.

By 1900 the machine was established in Memphis life and had already begun to effect its inexorable change in the life and values of the people. But the process of change worked slowly and subtly in their minds. Consciously, the people of Memphis still looked to the past, to the Old South, for their ideals. Gerald Capers has written: “From every man was demanded allegiance to four . . . ideals: to an unadulterated Protestant fundamentalism, to . . . the Old South; to the principle of white supremacy, and . . . to the Constitution of the United States.”<sup>14</sup> Of these ideals, the most passionately upheld was that of white supremacy. It was held above religion, morality, or law by all classes, and the fanaticism engendered in its defense explains much of the violence in the city’s life during the first two decades of the twentieth century. When “Wild Bill” Latura, a bemused dive-keeper, strode into a Negro saloon and without provocation

killed six of its patrons, his act was considered one of almost religious devotion, performed in the dramatic manner that he and his kind could appreciate.<sup>15</sup> To many people of the city he became a folk hero, and when his trial was held, there was practically no sentiment for conviction, and he was shortly freed.

In general, it was the poorer whites in the city who committed violence against the Negro. Yet all classes were acutely sensitive to the ideal of white supremacy, and it frequently was given a ringing affirmation in the press. The *Commercial Appeal* went far afield to proclaim: "The Anglo-Saxon will not be ruled no matter what the odds are against him. He possesses that imperious and unyielding despotism of conscious superiority which enabled Clive to defend with a handful of men the little fort of Arcot."<sup>16</sup>

The press was almost neurotically sensitive to northern criticism of the way the South handled the race problem and sometimes fancied an insult when probably none had been intended. When the Boston Woman's Club admitted Negro women to its rolls, the *Commercial Appeal* called it a "coon club" composed of "negresses and degenerate white women."<sup>17</sup> Many in Memphis probably shared the sentiment of one of Nathan Bedford Forrest's old soldiers, "an honored minister of the gospel," who wrote in a letter to the press that the South had suffered too many insults from the North on the race issue and he "had just as soon have another scrap as not."<sup>18</sup>

If the press did have occasion to portray the Negro in a favorable light, it never permitted the impression to remain. Despite Booker T. Washington's accomplishments, he was still, to the *Commercial Appeal*, "an Alabama coon."<sup>19</sup> W. H. Council, president of the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes, was given a word of praise by the *Commercial Appeal*, "since at no time has he misled his people into believing that they are anything other than inferior to the Anglo-Saxon."<sup>20</sup> Gratuitously, the paper added that "he was a negro

through and through—black as coal . . . kinky hair and big feet.”

When Theodore Roosevelt had Booker T. Washington to lunch in the White House in 1901, the *Commercial Appeal* indulged in an orgy of editorial execration. It called Roosevelt a “fluteplayer and a tin cowboy.”<sup>21</sup> In response to an editorial in the New York *World*, which had invoked the name of Liberty to shame the Southern press for its attack on Roosevelt, the *Commercial Appeal* replied:

Oh, Liberty, how many asses write idiotic drivel in thy name. Let the negro go North if he will; let him dine with the entire World force, let him man the building from the gold dome to the cellar. Let him take the editor's daughter to the opera. Let him be the editor's son-in-law. Why didn't the editor invite the negro from the dining room into the marriage chamber? Let the editor select Booker Washington as god-father for his clay-colored grandchild.<sup>22</sup>

The press was not alone in its indignation. E. W. Carmack, Tennessee's “peerless statesman,” in a speech in Memphis accused Roosevelt of turning the White House into a “nigger restaurant.”<sup>23</sup>

The luncheon affair had a ludicrous sequel in Memphis. In the fall of 1902 some prominent citizens decided to give a banquet honoring General Luke E. Wright, a distinguished Memphian, whom the late President McKinley had appointed to the Philippine Commission, and who had just returned to Memphis. An invitation was tendered President Roosevelt and was accepted. Suddenly, the flow of hospitable impulses began to slacken as those more acutely attuned to the white supremacy issue sensed the affront. Had not Roosevelt just a year previous dined with Booker T. Washington at the White House? The *Evening Scimitar* predicted a failure for the banquet because

this is not a Roosevelt region and this is not a Roosevelt town. President McKinley, one of the grandest men this country ever produced, ap-

pointed Gen. Wright a member of the Philippine Commission. If Mr. Roosevelt had been in his place he would probably have appointed . . . his chum, Booker Washington. He makes a boast of the fact that he entertained negroes in a social way at the executive mansion . . . and there is no record of the fact that the room has been disinfected or even the chair, knife, fork, plate and napkin deodorized.

There is no difference whatever between sitting down to dinner with a negro and sitting down with a man who not only thinks it is the proper thing to do, but who has done it time and again.<sup>24</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal*, quick to sense that its rival had overplayed its hand, rose to a plane of lofty dignity and called the *Scimitar's* editorial a "shocking breach of etiquette," a "causeless and insane assault upon the president of the United States."<sup>25</sup> It admitted a few might use the luncheon affair as a pretext for absenting themselves from the banquet, but added that the "great majority" of the people of Memphis felt outraged. Apparently the *Commercial Appeal* was correct in its assumption, for Roosevelt was given a dignified and enthusiastic welcome when he made his arrival into the city on November 19.

There were some in Memphis who respected the aspirations of the Negro and did not allow the white supremacy ideal to impose upon either their reason or their charity. Occasionally, a member of the clergy would add a note of moderation. The Reverend A. B. Curry, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, urged a "practical application" of Christian principles to the race problem, insisting that the Negro was a member of the human family, and it was the duty of the white man to help him attain the marks of culture.<sup>26</sup> Bishop Thomas F. Gailor of the Episcopal Church was commended by the *Washington Star* for his condemnation of lynching.<sup>27</sup> There were others, not of the clergy, who showed a concern for the amelioration of the Negro's lot through an improvement of his opportunities for health and education.<sup>28</sup> But in the years prior to World War I

Memphis produced no zealous apostles of justice for the Negro, and the interest that was shown in his welfare was decidedly paternalistic.

The white supremacy ideal as it became defined in the Old South was an inevitable folk response to a difficult social problem produced by two racial groups living together in a master-servant relationship—a problem that became more complex when the Negro was freed. In the post-Civil War era, white supremacy was used as an escape valve for frustrations induced by rural poverty on the one hand and the disorganized nature of city life on the other. Into the lives of many of the newcomers to twentieth century Memphis white supremacy brought a sense of purpose and drama.

Another ideal of the Old South to which the people of Memphis subscribed was, if not misused, laudable, even though it was more romantic than sound. They believed, as had their forebears, that a woman was innately good and that frequently a man might be something else. As the pages of the Memphis newspapers testify, many a man lost his life at the hands of an irate husband or father who believed the man must be blamed, for it was obvious that a woman could not initiate an impure act. To the men of Memphis, a woman was that idol of the Southern mind, “the shield-bearing Athena gleaming whitely in the clouds.”<sup>29</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal* was especially concerned with upholding the ideal of Southern womanhood, so much so that one is inclined to think that “Colonel” Michael W. Connelly, the probable writer of numerous editorials on this theme, was trying to compensate for a crumbling faith.<sup>30</sup> One editorial discussed with tortuous logic what the writer hopefully took to be signs of increasing acceptance of woman’s basically elevated position, as reflected in a popular song. The “fallen woman” in Paul Dresser’s hit of 1896, “Just Tell Them that You Saw Me,” he noted, was thoroughly exonerated.

She had quaffed to the lips the unholy chalice of sin; she had waded in the wine vats and crushed to a pulp under her feet the purpling grapes of desire; she had strayed from the paths of rectitude and become an unclean thing; but in the torrent of bright memories that rushed over her . . . she was no longer the guilty, but the victim of others' guilt.

The song, the editorial continued, expressed a "tardy admission of the fact that virtue with woman is innate, and that her degradation comes from contact with masculine turpitude, from a submission to a superior and more fiery animality."<sup>31</sup>

Probably Connelly achieved the most exalted reaches of the chivalric impulse in an editorial called "A Woman's Bosom."<sup>32</sup> It called the bosom the repository of all the sentiments that gave woman her exalted position, the seat of her compassion and the symbol of her maternal purpose. A female correspondent, feeling that Connelly had not exhausted his thesis, criticized him for limiting his discussion to women and asserted that men had bosoms too.<sup>33</sup> She further stated that Connelly had failed to distinguish between the "external" bosom and the "internal" bosom. Connelly defended his omission of the male bosom by saying women always acted through intuition, the source of which was the bosom, while men acted solely through the logic of the mind.<sup>34</sup> When it came to distinguishing between the external and internal bosom, Connelly was stumped.

When the American Tract Society circulated a report that characterized the poor white women of Southern cities as "feeble of body and as a general thing weak of mind and sodden with snuff," the *Commercial Appeal* testily suggested that "these sanctimonious scoundrels should be horsewhipped and drummed out of the country."<sup>35</sup>

Old South ideals were expressed in customs, some of which—the "feudal survivals" as H. C. Brearley called them—contributed to the violence that characterized Memphis life.<sup>36</sup> The horsewhipping suggested for some of the members of the Amer-

ican Tract Society was not just a figure of speech. In Memphis horsewhipping was still a form of retaliation when a woman's good name had been handled too cavalierly. News accounts reported the rawhiding of some unfortunate persons, sometimes of course, in the halls or on the steps of the Court House.<sup>37</sup>

There was no pose of sophisticated tolerance where a woman's virtue was concerned. Under the Old South's "unwritten law" a man was "almost required to slay another who . . . had by seduction or adultery injured the 'good name' of his wife, daughter, or kinswoman."<sup>38</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* was a zealous advocate of the "unwritten law":

Today after centuries of progression, we have reached a plane where there are other things dearer than life, and chief among these is female virtue. When this is slain . . . with devilish deliberation and cunning . . . the avenger has the right to go forth in quest of blood-atonement and if he does not do so he is unworthy of the civilization of the day.

There is a higher law . . . and that law readeth "Thou shalt protect female virtue at all hazards."<sup>39</sup>

Pistol carrying was prevalent at the turn of the century and was destined to persist for two decades more. "All classes carried pistols," one old resident recalled. "It was the customary procedure to put a pistol in your pocket when you went out at night."<sup>40</sup> The press reported:

everybody in this community who wishes to do so, carries a pistol. The enforcement of the law against pistol-carrying in this country is such a farce that nobody hesitates to go armed. . . . Today the condition of affairs is worse than it was twenty years ago. . . . There never was a time, unless it was immediately after the war, when the carrying of arms was so prevalent as now.<sup>41</sup>

In some degree, pistols may have been carried in emulation of the ideal type of Southern gentleman which still lingered in the fancy of many Southerners. A characterization of men of this type in Memphis was found in a letter to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The writer stated that the men of Memphis had been "brought up to regard personal honor and personal courage



as the highest attributes of the white race.”<sup>42</sup> Memphis men were called “genial, chivalrous, kind, hospitable, honest in their dealings and the best companions in the world,” but “what passes for jest in other parts of the country does not pass for a jest here. A man must be careful of his language. You cannot impugn a man’s honor and not fight unless you are a coward and run.”

While pistol carrying may have had some justification when Memphis was a frontier town, there was less reason for it in 1900, and it may have served more often as a symbol than as a means of defense. To carry a pistol in a conspicuous manner marked a man as a “blood,” a “heller,” a person who was likely to have a homicidal sensitivity about his honor and his women-folk. It was a short-cut to status when more respectable avenues seemed impassable.

The inevitable result of pistol-carrying was a succession of street murders. These “pseudo-duels” were the product of an almost unvarying formula. There would be a history of “bad blood” between the principals, a chance meeting on the street, an exchange of words, terminated by a play of pistols. If a trial ensued, the murderer could almost always gain acquittal on the grounds of self-defense. And apparently killings were common enough that they caused little excitement when they occurred. At a Mardi Gras dance in the Auditorium on North Main Street, when one of the dancers shot and killed another, the presence of the corpse on the floor “caused the briefest interruption to the homage to terpsichore.”<sup>43</sup> The revelers simply danced around the body.

Other customs revealed the influence of the rural background of many of the city’s people. Christmas, for example, was celebrated with fireworks and raucous conduct in a manner reminiscent of Old South plantation life, where the antics of slaves made the day one of noisy celebration.<sup>44</sup> Some people, of course, marked the season with behavior appropriate to its sacred na-

ture, but as the *Commercial Appeal* laconically noted, Christmas day of 1900 was characterized by "numerous cutting frays, assault and batteries, pistol displays, together with a liberal sprinkling of drunk and disorderly cases."<sup>45</sup> The profanation of Christmas continued to be the practice throughout the first two decades of the century. On Christmas day, 1905, there were four killings,<sup>46</sup> and the Christmas Eve of 1911 showed distinctly pagan characteristics:

The night before Christmas in Memphis has become like a wild Mardi Gras celebration. It has the color of a feast of Bacchus, accompanied by the dancing of satyrs. Young men and old men, women and children, old women and young girls, paraded the streets, blowing horns, ringing bells, firing torpedoes and by other things made themselves grotesque.<sup>47</sup>

Possibly a partial explanation for the wild revelry and violence at Christmas time lies in the observation made by W. J. Cash that there was in Southern thought "a huge vein of gloomy foreboding which trembled constantly on the verge of despair."<sup>48</sup> Cash's observation may also explain emotional excesses that periodically gripped the evangelical Protestant congregations in the city.<sup>49</sup> Until his death in 1906, the famous Georgia preacher, Sam Jones, made frequent appearances in the Methodist churches of Memphis. It was reported that although his sermons began at eight in the evening, every seat in the church was usually occupied by six.<sup>50</sup> Even the large up-town churches with socially prominent congregations had intense revivalistic campaigns. In 1906 the Second Presbyterian Church on Hernando Street had one "revival" that lasted 118 days. Led by evangelist George C. Cates, the revival reached a climax on New Year's Eve, 1906, with a service lasting until dawn. Shortly after midnight "several of the faithful broke over the rim of the proprieties and shouted lustily. . . ." <sup>51</sup> Goaded by apostolic zeal, some of the young men of the congregation went out and found a drunk on the streets whom they induced to attend the meeting. "Staggering down the aisle he fell down

at the altar where many entered earnestly into prayer that he might be made sober first and then convert him soundly. It was not long until he was made sober and he made a full surrender to his God, took the pulpit platform, and made a perfectly coherent, sensible resolve to lead a clean, sober life hereafter."

While revival meetings raged, the skeptical voice of the *Commercial Appeal* was raised to question their motivation and value. The measure of success of a revival, it said, "is the contribution box. It is called 'conversion,' but conversion is only an incident of contribution, and it is a pleasanter word to use—more euphemistic."<sup>52</sup>

The people of Memphis had a heavy share of drama in these years, and the "human interest" stories in the press that described pathetic and tragic events suggested they were relished, often morbidly, by readers. Executions, with the victim almost always a Negro, drew fascinated crowds. Every year or so the Reverend George Washington was called upon to prepare spiritually a member of his race for the ordeal of hanging. Before a packed jail yard the drama on the scaffold was enacted:

"Goodbye, Nathan."

"Goodbye to all," rejoined Nathan, "I'm going on now."

"I've been praying for you and for myself, and when you get over there jest tell 'em I'm coming," said a fat negro woman in the crowd.

"All right, I hope you will; I hope I'll see you in glory land," said Nathan.

"What will I tell mama, Nathan?" said his cousin, who had come by his invitation.

"Tell her goodbye and tell her I've gone on to glory," said the doomed man.<sup>53</sup>

A mother wrote to the *Commercial Appeal*: "Please give me space in your valuable paper to appeal to the good citizens of Memphis to contribute to a cash fund to assist me in bringing the remains of my dear boy home and give him a Christian burial after the execution."<sup>54</sup> The newspaper called her an "honest, hard working woman, at all times faithful to her

church duties" and promised to receive contributions and announce the amounts day by day. The newspaper knew its readers, so many of them newcomers to the city, wanted an emotional and personal relation to drama, as they had been able to have it in the rural countryside from which they had come.

For most of the people of Memphis, as for most Americans, a drama of larger proportions had started just before the turn of the century. Having settled the West and erected an industrial empire of amazing productivity, the nation was exerting itself toward a new goal. For a decade, politicians, scholars, and military theorists had noted with increasing alarm the preoccupation of Americans with material welfare and had urged an elevation of the national outlook to encompass a larger destiny.<sup>55</sup> With the Reverend Josiah Strong proclaiming to the nation that "this powerful Anglo-Saxon race will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea," few doubted that America's mission was God-given.<sup>56</sup> The time had arrived—the struggle taking place in Cuba demanded that Americans exert themselves for freedom.

The Spanish-American War gave the American people a cause, and though the cause was probably not so noble as they fancied, it enabled the people of Memphis to identify themselves with the national spirit. Now the South could take the lead in upholding national honor and keeping America true to its purpose.

Memphis indulged itself in the mood of the times. It was not difficult to extend the doctrine of white supremacy to one of Anglo-Saxon racial destiny, or to merge the sectional spirit of combat into the cult of national militarism. The *Commercial Appeal* editorially described the Spaniard as having "a cruel and revengeful impulse," who "hates, and has a consuming desire to wreak personal vengeance."<sup>57</sup> The American, on the other hand, had "a higher conception of duty, a nobler aspiration in war. He

fight without malice, without revengeful impulse, but he fights to the finish." The mood of bravado was illustrated in a letter from "American" to the *Commercial Appeal* in which he expressed his confidence in "our ability and readiness to whip combined Europe if necessary."<sup>58</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* commented that "we can whip all creation if we must, but the undertaking is one which we could accomplish with much more ease later on." When news reached Memphis of Admiral Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay the *Commercial Appeal* observed complacently that the "result can be explained only by the fact of the superiority of the American over the Spanish race."<sup>59</sup>

The drama of war was not produced solely by action in far-away places. There was heroic posturing in Memphis. A characteristic scene was the presentation of a regimental flag to the Fourth Tennessee Regiment. Some of "the fairest daughters of Memphis" assembled in the Lyceum Theatre on a warm August night to witness the presentation.<sup>60</sup> The flag was accepted by Major Eldridge Wright, who made "an exquisite speech. . . . He talked about the flags past and present, about the soldier heroes of the past and those that are to be." In his "superbly eloquent" conclusion he sent a deep thrill into the hearts of his listeners when he warned the parents of volunteers that the honor of the regiment was more important than life and that the regimental flag would never be dishonored. Following the speech, the audience was treated to a "tableau vivant" which featured "America" (Ruth Martin) holding the flag of the regiment, with "Cuba" (Estelle Wolf) at her feet. Miss Martin sang "There's Room for One More Star," in a "clear sweet voice," and Miss Wolf performed a Cuban dance. And "then while Grace Lewellyn recited 'Our Defenders' Miss Wolf stood close-by, supporting the flag with its folds wrapped around her."

The youngest and most renowned of those who went to Cuba from Memphis was Dabney Scales Royster, who at the age of

twelve ran away with an army group passing through the city. Ending up with Roosevelt's Rough Riders in Cuba, he achieved fame of a sort by shooting a Cuban boy caught stealing a ham. Royster claimed that Roosevelt, not believing that he could hit the Cuban, challenged him to try it.<sup>61</sup>

The people of Memphis were unanimous in their support of the war, and there was little doubt about how they stood on the issues of peace. Both the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Evening Scimitar* expressed decidedly imperialistic views. The *Commercial Appeal*, especially, was willing to follow "manifest destiny" wherever it might lead:

The United States is in a commanding position and it must command or serve. It is different from any other nation that ever rose or fell on the face of the earth and what it is prepared to do and competent to do in carrying the civilization which it has developed and perfected to other nations, it must do or prove unworthy of its exalted position and recreant to its manifest destiny.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, when William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic presidential candidate in the election of 1900, announced his determination to campaign against imperialism, there was cause for political soul searching. The *Evening Scimitar*, critical of Bryan anyway, stated that his position meant that "the people of the South are expected to endorse the doctrine that the commerce of this country shall be confined to our own border, except as other outlets may be gained through the medium of commercial treaties."<sup>63</sup> The *Scimitar* thought this too much to ask of the South in view of the expected impetus territorial expansion would give to the cotton trade and it refused to support Bryan. While the *Commercial Appeal* was an "ardent expansionist," it declared that it would remain faithful to the Democratic party, pointing out that it was not "the part of wisdom to throw away a good apple because it has a speck on it and pick up one entirely rotten."<sup>64</sup> That some voters may have placed the cause of im-

perialism above party loyalty is suggested by the relative strength of McKinley's vote.<sup>65</sup>

Memphis, like other American cities, was eager to extend its hospitality to war heroes. In January, 1900, a committee of twenty citizens went to Washington in a special Pullman car to invite Admiral Dewey and his bride to visit the city. Dewey, having previously indicated his willingness to consider a Democratic presidential nomination, probably reckoned the political value of the acceptance he gave the committee.<sup>66</sup>

Dewey arrived on May 5, and was given the "Southern welcome" that the reception committee had planned. Mayor J. J. Williams and Elias Lowenstein, department store magnate, greeted Dewey at the station. As he got off the train the band played "Dixie." Company "A" of the United Confederate Veterans led the procession to the Peabody Hotel, where Bishop Thomas F. Gailor, the city's most distinguished clergyman, gave the official welcome. The next morning the admiral drove out Linden Street to see the long line of handsome residences. Reaching Lauderdale Street, the party turned to visit the Jennie Higbee school for girls. The students, dressed in white, were introduced by Miss Higbee, who assured the admiral that "here in the south . . . you can witness the ardor with which the same sweet pure lips can sing 'The Star Spangled Banner' with patriotic pride as they can with pathos recite 'The Conquered Banner.'" <sup>67</sup> The official parade was held that afternoon. Several companies of Confederate veterans and a thousand school boys dressed in white added to the impressiveness of the event. Afterwards Dewey was given a reception by the Negroes. Throughout his visit Dewey declined to capitalize upon opportunities for political speech-making and confined himself to a few perfunctory remarks.

In the spring of 1902 Admiral Schley came to Memphis to receive his hero's due. His visit was largely the result of a widespread feeling in the city, inspired by editorials in the *Commer-*

*cial Appeal*, that the heroic stature of Schley was being sacrificed to the perversity and egotism of Admiral Sampson.<sup>68</sup> In the fall of 1901 the *Commercial Appeal* had begun collecting donations to purchase a medal for Schley. By the following spring \$1,500 had been raised, and an invitation was dispatched to Schley, "artistically engraved on a circular plate of solid silver," mounted on Tennessee oak. The bearers of the invitation asserted that they represented not only the people of Memphis "but the right-thinking people of the entire nation." Schley was told that he was being invited to Memphis "to make manifest the high esteem in which you are held, and to accentuate the insistence of our demand that the guerdon of glory be bestowed upon its rightful owner."<sup>69</sup> When he came to Memphis, Schley was presented with a silver service fittingly inscribed.

The hospitality that Memphis showed Dewey and Schley resulted from a genuine appreciation for their accomplishments in the national cause. But it was the Civil War heroes represented by the United Confederate Veterans, in Memphis for their 1901 reunion, who received the most the city could offer in respect and affection. In Memphis the "Lost Cause" was an important and often a personal sentiment among the people. For many, the reunion was more than a festive occasion; it was the means of commemorating and revivifying noble traditions which a more hurried age tended to forget.

Preparations for the reunion, to be held toward the end of May, began in January. A. B. Pickett, editor of the *Evening Scimitar*, was named to raise \$50,000 for the entertainment fund,<sup>70</sup> and committees were appointed to take care of special phases of preparation.<sup>71</sup> By the end of April the city had been decorated. The master achievement was the Court of Honor, a double row of white columns standing on each side of Main Street from north to south Court Street. Each column represented a Confederate state, and on top of each was an urn burning oil to illuminate the Court at night. At each end of the



Court were two "superb" arches erected to the army and navy of the Confederacy and to the men and women of the South. In the center of the Court, surrounded by white columns, was the reviewing stand of the commander-in-chief.

While the city was being decorated, 150 carpenters were building Confederate Hall, a large structure overlooking the river that had a seating capacity of eighteen thousand in its gallery and over three thousand on the convention floor. The building was also to house the reunion post office and to provide an office for each one of the state headquarters. If need be, fifteen hundred veterans could be quartered in it.

By May 27, the day before the official opening of the convention, everything was in order. Fifteen thousand Confederate flags, distributed by the *Commercial Appeal* with its May 26 edition, adorned the city. Provisions for entertainment ranged from "high class vaudeville" to Handel's *Messiah*, the latter to be presented in the Auditorium by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra assisted by eminent soloists and the local Mozart Society chorus. The baseball team, the "Chickasaws," was slated to play the University of Sewanee. For those who appreciated gayer entertainment two carnival companies were brought to town. Also planned were a flower parade, in which two hundred carriages were to participate, and fireworks from barges on the river. For veterans without means to buy their food, a commissary was organized which was large enough to serve six thousand persons.<sup>72</sup>

On the evening before the convention opened, a large group of townsfolk and veterans assembled at the station to await the arrival of the commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans, General John B. Gordon. The atmosphere of good humor and excitement that prevailed was heightened when a violent downpour forced the crowd into the station. Every time an engine whistle was heard, someone yelled "There she comes!" and the Memphis Union Band fell to playing "Dixie"

to the accompaniment of the rebel yell "repeated again and again." <sup>73</sup>

The climax of the reunion was reached on May 30. With the bands playing "The Old North State," "My Maryland," "The Bonnie Blue Flag," and "Dixie," fifteen thousand veterans, with Forrest's cavalry on horseback, marched through the streets of the city.<sup>74</sup> With Generals John B. Gordon, Fitzhugh Lee, and Joe Wheeler at their head, it was called "the most imposing spectacle ever witnessed in the South."<sup>75</sup>

Memphis had another veteran's reunion in 1909, but it failed to achieve the same spirit that characterized the one of 1901. All except a few of the old leaders had passed on, and veterans were increasingly beset with the infirmities of age. The *Commercial Appeal* observed: "This will be the last time that the Old Gray Guard will gather 'by the flow of the inland river.'"<sup>76</sup>

In February, 1901, as the city prepared for that year's veteran's reunion, President William McKinley was invited to join with the veterans in commemorating the Lost Cause. McKinley could not make the date of the reunion, but was able to come to Memphis just prior to it on April 30. His visit was climaxed by a banquet at the Peabody Hotel, where such local representatives of industrial Bourbonism as Colonel Jerome Hill, cotton, and Sam T. Carnes, utilities, sat comfortably among such notables as John Hay, John Jacob Astor, George B. Cortelyou, Stuyvesant Fish, and John B. Long. At the conclusion of the repast of oysters on the half shell, teal duck, and lobster cutlets, McKinley struck a responsive note when he justified the Open Door policy with China and the acquisition of the Philippines, on the ground of the presumed benefits they would afford the cotton trade. As it happened during the Dewey visit, the speeches and toasts dwelt somewhat self-consciously on the theme of a reunited country and the contributions of Tennessee in the recent war with Spain.<sup>77</sup>

Memphis had another famous, but quite different, visitor the next year, who came unannounced and remained only one day, but who aroused such interest that the *Commercial Appeal* was forced to acknowledge that "as a drawing card she surpasses the genial statesman and stump orator known as 'Our Bob.'"<sup>78</sup> When a middle-aged woman walked into a Memphis saloon and dashed to the floor the glass of liquor that its thirsty possessor was about to turn down his throat, word got about that Carrie Nation was in town. Depriving a man of his drink was sensational enough for Memphis, but when Mrs. Nation climbed into a bootblack's chair on the corner of Main and Madison to get a shine, a new and unheard of level in unorthodox conduct had been reached. By evening, everyone knew that she was in Memphis, and many went to Court Square to hear the lecture she had promised to deliver at eight o'clock. As the time for the speaking drew near, the crowd mistook a local citizen for Mrs. Nation. Embarrassed and flustered, the lady headed blindly for the police station, where Captain George O'Haver spirited her through a rear door and conveyed her home in a police wagon. Meanwhile, Mrs. Nation was making a tour of the saloons, where she quickly picked up a howling mob. Returning to Court Square, she addressed a crowd of nearly ten thousand. Her speech was reported as being "thoroughly good-humored and delivered with force."<sup>79</sup> When Mrs. Nation beheld a young miscreant smoking a cigarette, the following exchange took place:

"Young man, don't smoke that cigarette and commit suicide before my eyes. You need common sense." He geyed her and she again retorted: "Young man, I told you to stop smoking. The devil will get you some day and give you all the smoking you want. Your upper story is for rent. Why don't you tack a sign on it?"

"I ain't been in jail," he shouted back to her.

"But I have," said she. "I went to jail to keep you out of hell. I can get out of jail, but you cannot get out of hell."

Carrie Nation's visit to Memphis seems to have provided the city with as much entertainment as had the Confederate veterans' reunion.

Had there been no war and no succession of visiting celebrities, life in Memphis at the turn of the century still would have been colorful. Industrialization and expanding trade brought wealth to the city, and wealth permitted an indulgence in the new and glamorous fads.

By 1900 the cycling fad had just about passed. One old devotee of the cinder path recalled that four years previously "there never was a city more cycle mad than Memphis. Everyone owned a wheel then and it was considered the proper thing among the smart set to ride bicycles."<sup>80</sup> He shrewdly attributed the decline of cycling to the fact that it had been abandoned by "society," for when "society realized that its poorer sister and brother were riding on the same boulevards, drinking and lunching at the same road houses and refectories—one by one . . . they took up golf and other stylish sports."

As a "stylish sport," golf began to be popular among the well-to-do around 1900. In 1898, "Professor" W. B. Hoare, "one of the golf champions of the United States" arrived in Memphis to teach beginners at the course at the head of Peabody Place.<sup>81</sup> By 1903 the *Commercial Appeal's* society editor felt that the "social education of the modern girl has been woefully neglected if she has not even a speaking acquaintance with golf."<sup>82</sup>

Ping-pong enjoyed a vogue among "society" people. It was a game for the "drawing-room girl," who apparently found it useful for more than the exercise it provided. The "indoor athletic girl" presented a charming pose "with her skirts held tight in her one hand, while she plays with the other." If she were wise, she would "pay particular attention to the frills on the bottom of her frock, and on her petticoats, for they will show and be very dainty and chic on the reverse."<sup>83</sup>

The participation of women in sports was regarded by many as "a symptom of declining gentility, of the new, rude, free ways unaccountably attractive to the young."<sup>84</sup> Yet Victorianism was still strong. While some Memphis girls might enjoy sports, as a rule they were thoroughly supervised in their social conduct. For a young man to keep his feminine companion out after dark was an act "beyond any reasonable explanation."<sup>85</sup> A young lady, inquiring whether or not it would be proper to accept an invitation to the theater from a man whom she had met only four times, was advised that she might accept providing the gentleman furnished a chaperone from among her friends or relatives.<sup>86</sup>

Memphis women, like women everywhere, were acutely conscious of fashion changes, and the press devoted considerable space to them. The *Sunday Commercial Appeal* regularly offered a full page of "Fashion Notes from Paris." Memphis women in 1898 were losing their interest in veils, studying "new ways of decorating the neck." It was proper to tie one's "big soft silk cravat under the left side of the chin and let one end fall to the bust, the other to the waistline."<sup>87</sup> The year 1899 found sailor hats in vogue, and otherwise fashion demanded "a long, steady pull on your stay strings" to achieve the small waist, the "sweeping hip and perfectly flat abdomen."<sup>88</sup> The shirt waist became the height of fashion shortly after the turn of the century and it enjoyed a considerable vogue in Memphis. When other styles began to displace the shirt waist, the *Commercial Appeal* protested. The shirt waist "should not go," it declared. "To the normal-minded man who has not entered upon his second childhood there is nothing . . . as ravishingly attractive as a shirt waist when worn, with the sole exception of that which it contains."<sup>89</sup> As for the men, a "well known tailor" was said to have remarked that "It is doubtful whether there is one man in Memphis who observes closely fashion's decrees."<sup>90</sup>

No innovation had more far-reaching effects than the automobile. Memphis reacted to it in a typical manner. It was first regarded as a curiosity, a plaything of the rich, or the foolish passion of some "bug" who taxed the resources of his neighborhood bicycle shop to keep his machine running.<sup>91</sup> As automobiles became more numerous people began to regard them as a challenge, a threat to the normal order of things.

In 1900 the automobile was regarded merely as a curiosity by most of the people of Memphis. But Mayor Williams was sufficiently impressed with the merits of the contraption to announce that he was considering the purchase of a "locomobile" for a patrol wagon. He thought its usefulness too obvious to be ignored, noting that "within five minutes after the burner is touched off the wagon is ready to move."<sup>92</sup> Apparently the mayor went no further than to consider the purchase. The first automobile in Memphis was owned by General Sam T. Carnes, the utility magnate.<sup>93</sup> Carnes had an electric, and demonstrated it publicly by placing it in the parade during the Confederate veterans' reunion. Those loyal to the horse were made glad when Carnes' vehicle suffered mechanical failure.

By 1902 the automobile was no longer just a curiosity but a matter of public concern. The *Commercial Appeal* defined the problem:

The rapid gait of the automobile is apt to cause many runaways and much damage to life and property. . . . We can very readily imagine the day when the farmers and country people will repel this danger just as did their forefathers the perils of the wilderness. . . .

A few catastrophes . . . and those who have suffered . . . will get out their guns again, and will treat the automobile as their forefathers treated the panther and bear.<sup>94</sup>

The following year Memphis had about forty automobiles,<sup>95</sup> and the *Commercial Appeal* regretfully came to the conclusion that the craze was assuming epidemic proportions. It spoke of streets "crowded with fast moving machines," and touching on

a social aspect of the new mode of transportation, it reported that automobiles were "doing a double sketch every night through the park avenues . . . and it is recorded that the joys of life are never fully realized until a spin is made under such conditions and with appropriate company."<sup>96</sup>

The newspaper complained that a "number of local automobilists have exhibited the same tendency to fast and reckless speed which has caused Willie K. Vanderbilt, Jr. to figure in various police courts."<sup>97</sup> To curb speeders, the city government in 1903 enacted a law providing that "no horseless vehicle" should exceed a speed of eight miles per hour.<sup>98</sup> It was in this year, too, that the city first required the registration of automobiles.<sup>99</sup>

After 1903 the automobile became an accepted part of the life of Memphis. Machines were advertised regularly in the press, and the *Commercial Appeal* began devoting a page of its Sunday edition to the care and upkeep of cars. Their "necessity" was increasingly accepted, and the person who pretended to keep abreast of the times found that he could scarcely afford to be without one.

But neither the trappings of modernity nor the affecting of new fads by the wealthy could change the old river town overnight or alter its faith that the Old South had possessed the true principles on which the good society of the future would be built. Main Street might echo to the explosions of automobile engines, but above their noise "from dawn to dusk could be heard the loud clamorous conversation of dray drivers and the shouted commands to their beasts. And later, in the quieter hours of the night the noise of city traffic gave way to the more distant sound of innumerable barking dogs occasionally punctuated by the whistle of a freight engine."<sup>100</sup> As the new century got underway, the *Commercial Appeal* took note of the forces shaping the culture of the Western World and made the following observations:

A certain aloofness and lack of devotion to commercialism during the last twenty years of its growing ascendancy in the national life, coupled with that temperate addiction to business which has ever characterized Southern peoples, have kept this portion of the United States from falling into a contemptuous attitude toward intellectual and social interests. . . . There are not so many professional reformers in the South as in the North, because the superior solidarity of the people of this section minimizes the evils of civilization and renders the contrasts of life more endurable. . . .

The old world has seen ages of superstition, ages of faith, ages of fanaticism, ages of art, ages of conquest, and we have had an age of commercialism with its crowning glory of consolidated capitalism. . . . Apparently the climax has been reached, and there are many signs that the human spirit will emancipate itself from its too exclusive devotion to business during the twentieth century.<sup>101</sup>

And who would take the lead in this emancipation? The South, of course.





## *The Economic Base*

“**I** AM IMPRESSED . . . with the manifest wealth of the people of this city,” declared the celebrated president of Harvard University, Charles W. Eliot, when he visited Memphis in 1909.<sup>1</sup> Very likely he was saying something he felt he was expected to say. Memphis prosperity had become a standard refrain with civic leaders, with some justification, for the industrial revolution that had begun during the eighties had made Memphis a boom town.

The industrialization of Memphis was not an isolated phenomenon, but a phase of what was known as the New South movement. The tragedy of the Civil War and the almost equally tragic aftermath of Reconstruction produced a conviction among some Southern leaders that the failure of the Old South to industrialize had been responsible for its misfortunes. Men like Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, popularized the New South idea by powerful preaching that the war, by awakening the people to a need for a reappraisal of their way of life, had been a blessing in disguise; or in his picturesque phrase, the South had “found her jewel in the toad’s head of defeat.”<sup>2</sup>

National economic conditions were propitious for an expansion of Southern industry. The South, along with the West, provided the field for the first real imperialistic impulse of Northern capital. The resumption of specie payment in 1879 stimulated a general business revival in 1880. New factories were opened and old ones enlarged, a development that affected the South by increasing the demand for Southern raw materials, which in turn caused money to flow into the South.<sup>3</sup>

The initial industrialization of Memphis appears to have resulted more from the investment of Northern than of Southern capital. George Curtis, a correspondent of the *Chicago Record-Herald*, while touring the South in 1905 observed that two-thirds of the enterprises of Memphis were started by men from the North and East.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as Capers has written, "no southern town was more likely to become the first depot of northern capitalists than Memphis. Better located than New Orleans, the town on the bluff possessed commercial and industrial possibilities with which the North . . . was well acquainted."<sup>5</sup>

The most spectacular phase of the city's industrialization occurred between 1880 and 1890. In 1880 the city had \$2,313,975 invested in manufacturing establishments that turned out products valued at \$4,413,422. By 1890 the respective figures were \$9,357,821 and \$13,244,538.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, during this decade the industrial growth of Memphis was greater than that of other Southern cities of comparable size. The percentage increase in invested capital from 1880 to 1890 was 304, while the increases for Nashville, Atlanta, and Richmond were 154.5, 285.2, and 142.4, respectively.<sup>7</sup> Industrial gains made by Memphis during this period were even more significantly shown by the percentage increase in the value of manufactured products. In this important respect Memphis gained more than 200 per cent, a higher rate of growth than that of any of the aforementioned cities.<sup>8</sup>

From 1890 to the turn of the century the growth of industry was less spectacular, amounting to an increase in capitalization of only 19.6 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Such a lag was general throughout the South. The Panic of 1893 retarded capital investment throughout the nation, while Southern cities suffered the added burden of a sectional depression resulting from the low price of cotton. Yet the hard times of the nineties did not weaken the growing faith that business enterprise was the means by which Memphis would become great and the more worthy of her citizens acquire wealth.

As the new century opened, industry was hailed by many as a certain savior, especially since the cotton trade seemed to be incurably sick. Even the *Commercial Appeal* came to recognize that it had been in error when on previous occasions it had criticized the commercial spirit. "There can be little doubt," it declared in 1903, "that such growth as has come to Memphis within the last ten years has come largely through the advances made by the city in manufactures."<sup>10</sup>

Great expectations were justified. Between 1899 and 1919 capital invested in industry increased from \$9,767,000 to \$67,107,494; the value of manufactured products, from \$6,354,000 to \$39,593,146, and the number of wage earners in industry, from 6,626 to 11,963.<sup>11</sup> Bank debits to individual accounts, which constitute a fairly accurate index to business activity, increased from \$515,000,000 in 1900 to \$1,529,000,000 in 1915.<sup>12</sup> The city also experienced a considerable development in building activity during the two decades after the turn of the century.<sup>13</sup>

The economic expansion in Memphis was paralleled in other Southern cities. Between 1904 and 1914, the amount and increase in the value of manufactured products in Atlanta were similar to those of Memphis in the same period. Richmond and Birmingham enjoyed a greater rate of increase, Nashville a lesser one.<sup>14</sup>

In some Southern cities circumstances of location and availability of resources made for the predominance of certain industries. The location of Memphis in the heart of the still untouched hardwood forests of the mid-Mississippi Valley made lumber the city's major industry. The hardwood industry in Memphis had begun in 1879 when Northern millmen began to investigate Memphis as a site for milling and woodworking enterprises. Their Middle Western forests were almost exhausted, and they recognized the advantages of having their mills closer to the source of supply.<sup>15</sup> As a result, during the nineties many mills moved from Indiana and Illinois into Memphis. The lumber industry of the city, which in 1880 was capitalized at only \$196,000, grew with such rapidity that by 1900 its capitalization had reached \$2,511,038.<sup>16</sup> In that year Memphis could boast of its pre-eminence in lumber with the slogan, "First Hardwood Market, Second Largest General Market in the World—Ships to Every American and Foreign Consuming Center."<sup>17</sup>

The lumber industry of Memphis consisted principally of milling and planing operations. In 1900 there were fourteen sawmills and six planing mills located at the southern extremity of the city near the bank of the Mississippi, and on the Wolf River, a stream that marked the northern limits of the city. Waterfront sites for the mills were almost a necessity, since the logs were floated down the Mississippi to Memphis in immense rafts. In addition to the sawmills within or immediately adjacent to the city, there were an estimated five hundred mills within a hundred mile radius of Memphis, producing over one billion feet of lumber annually.<sup>18</sup> Since in most instances these mills represented tributary operations of the Memphis lumber interests, they may be considered a part of the city's industry.

Woodworking manufactures formed another part of the lumber industry in Memphis. Prior to 1900 they developed chiefly along the lines of box-making and cooperage work,

although furniture, coffins, and other finished products were made in limited amounts. By 1900 the city had four cooperage companies, three exporting stave-making concerns, and four producing staves for domestic use. In addition, there were four box-making plants and one firm engaged in making woodwork for use in the parlors of the city's new-rich. Together, these enterprises used about 12 per cent of the lumber produced. The distributing phase of the industry was handled by twenty-three wholesale lumber yards and ten retail concerns. The retailers catered exclusively to the local building trade, while the wholesalers handled lumber and lumber products exported to domestic and foreign markets. It was estimated that 40 per cent of the hardwood handled in Memphis went for export, most of it to Germany.<sup>19</sup>

From 1900 to 1920 the lumber industry grew steadily though less spectacularly than in the two decades preceding 1900. The two and one-half million dollar capitalization of 1900, representing 26 per cent of the city's total industrial capitalization, increased to \$4,854,240 by 1919.<sup>20</sup> By this latter date, however, the relative strength of lumber had declined to 7 per cent of the city's total industrial capitalization, partly because of the dwindling forest reserves in the mid-Mississippi Valley, and partly because the city's industry was becoming increasingly diversified.

By 1920 the lumber industry had changed. Footage of lumber produced apparently declined. In 1900 the *Commercial Appeal* cited a production estimate of the Merchants Exchange of 337,000,000 feet.<sup>21</sup> Figures published by the Memphis Chamber of Commerce for 1920 placed production at 300,000,000 feet.<sup>22</sup> But if milling operations had declined, production and diversification in woodworking enterprises had increased. Box-making and cooperage work, the leading woodworking enterprises in 1900, had become relatively minor ones in 1920. With the rise of the automobile industry, Memphis woodworking

interests developed a specialty in automobile wheels and bodies which by 1920 far overshadowed other woodworking production. In that year production of boxes was valued at \$2,500,000, while the value of automobile wheel and body work was \$33,600,000.<sup>23</sup> Sashes and doors, boat oars, and veneers combined to contribute \$19,000,000 to the total value of the wood products industry. Manufactured wood products had come to exceed lumber production in value by over \$3,000,000. Thus the milling and planing industry was replaced by the more stable and specialized manufacturing in wood which, in the long run, offered steadier profits.

Memphis also claimed pre-eminence in its second largest industry, the manufacture of cottonseed products. The location of the city in the center of one of the greatest cotton producing regions of the United States provided an abundant and immediately available supply of cottonseed. Like the rise of the lumber industry, the development of the cottonseed products industry began in the eighties. The capitalization of the industry, which in 1880 amounted to \$535,000, had increased by 1900 to \$1,550,000, and by 1920 to \$6,000,000.<sup>24</sup> The cottonseed products industry had the highest capitalization of any single industry in Memphis from 1880 to 1920, although the lumber industry gave employment to over twice as many wage earners. Lumber had 1,288 employees in 1909 and cottonseed products only five hundred.<sup>25</sup>

Along with the lumber and cottonseed products industries, there developed several specialized types of minor manufacturing interests in Memphis. The Tennessee Brewing Company, makers of the famous Erlanger Beer, turned out 250,000 barrels of lager beer annually.<sup>26</sup> The city claimed to be the largest snuff manufacturing center in the world, and as the new century progressed printing and publishing and the manufacture of drugs and pharmaceutical supplies developed into sizable industries.<sup>27</sup>

Avid for industry, Memphis went to considerable lengths to induce Northern manufacturing concerns to relocate in the city.<sup>28</sup> The extent to which the publicizing campaigns of local businessmen were responsible for attracting industry is indeterminable, but there was no lack of activity in this field. One of the earliest of the several organizations that sought to extend the city's economic interests was the Memphis Merchants Exchange. Organized in 1884, its charter stated in part that its purpose was "to promote uniformity in the customs and usages of merchants" and to "acquire and to disseminate valuable commercial and economic information."<sup>29</sup> In 1898 the Exchange, with a membership made up mostly of manufacturers and dealers in cottonseed products, began furnishing information to concerns that showed an interest in relocating in Memphis.<sup>30</sup>

Another organization founded more specifically for the purpose of attracting industry was the Industrial League. Established in 1898 for "the sole purpose of promoting and locating factories in Memphis," it was supported by the industrialists of the city.<sup>31</sup> For the next two years it actively publicized the city's advantages for industry through the newspapers and in its annual reports. And it followed through by corresponding with Northern manufacturers, and, if interest was shown, by talking with them.<sup>32</sup>

In its secretary, E. B. Miller, the League possessed an energetic and thoughtful advocate of the South's need for industry. He preached this cause in addresses before groups of local businessmen and in the numerous articles he contributed to the local press. He believed the "great need of the South is factories, which will build the towns and cities and create local consumers for the farm. The value of farm lands can only increase as the nearby towns increase in population."<sup>33</sup> Factories, he believed, would lead to a diversified agriculture, since urban working populations would require varied foodstuffs from the farms. He opposed the popular cry for large cotton mills with the argu-

ment that there "are many manufacturing plants with small capital of far more value than large cotton mills."<sup>34</sup> Cotton mills, he said, "employ the cheapest labor to be found. . . . An ordinary \$100,000 spinning mill will employ from 100 to 125 hands at 75 cents per day. . . . A \$10,000 pottery plant will employ 100 at \$2 per day."

Under Miller's direction the Industrial League seems to have been successful in attracting outside capital into Memphis. It was credited with persuading the Virginia and Carolina Chemical Company to start construction of a \$100,000 plant for the manufacture of fertilizers in Memphis in June, 1900.<sup>35</sup> In July, 1900, Miller reported that the League had secured an additional five industries for Memphis.<sup>36</sup> But such good works were short-lived. With the resignation of Secretary Miller in 1901, the Industrial League languished, and the city was temporarily without this means of publicizing its investment opportunities.

The demise of the Industrial League pointed up the need for sustained efforts to secure industry. In the absence of an organized program, individuals worked to create a community interest in industrial development. In 1901 a group of the city's prominent businessmen attended a session of the Southern Industrial Association held at Philadelphia. Colonel Jerome Hill, head of one of the city's oldest and most substantial cotton firms and owner of extensive properties, represented the state of Tennessee. R. L. McKellar, president of the Memphis Merchants Exchange and an outstanding member of the city's younger group of businessmen, represented Memphis.<sup>37</sup> That same year Judge T. J. Latham, president of the city waterworks, offered to be one of twenty-five men to subscribe \$1,000 each to an industrial development fund. Latham, in urging the organization of a new Industrial League, said that Memphis ought to have industries "even if they have to be purchased at an extravagant price."<sup>38</sup> In 1902 a new Industrial League was organized along the lines



of its predecessor, but after four years of indifferent success it passed from the scene. It lacked the kind of leadership that E. B. Miller had provided the parent organization.

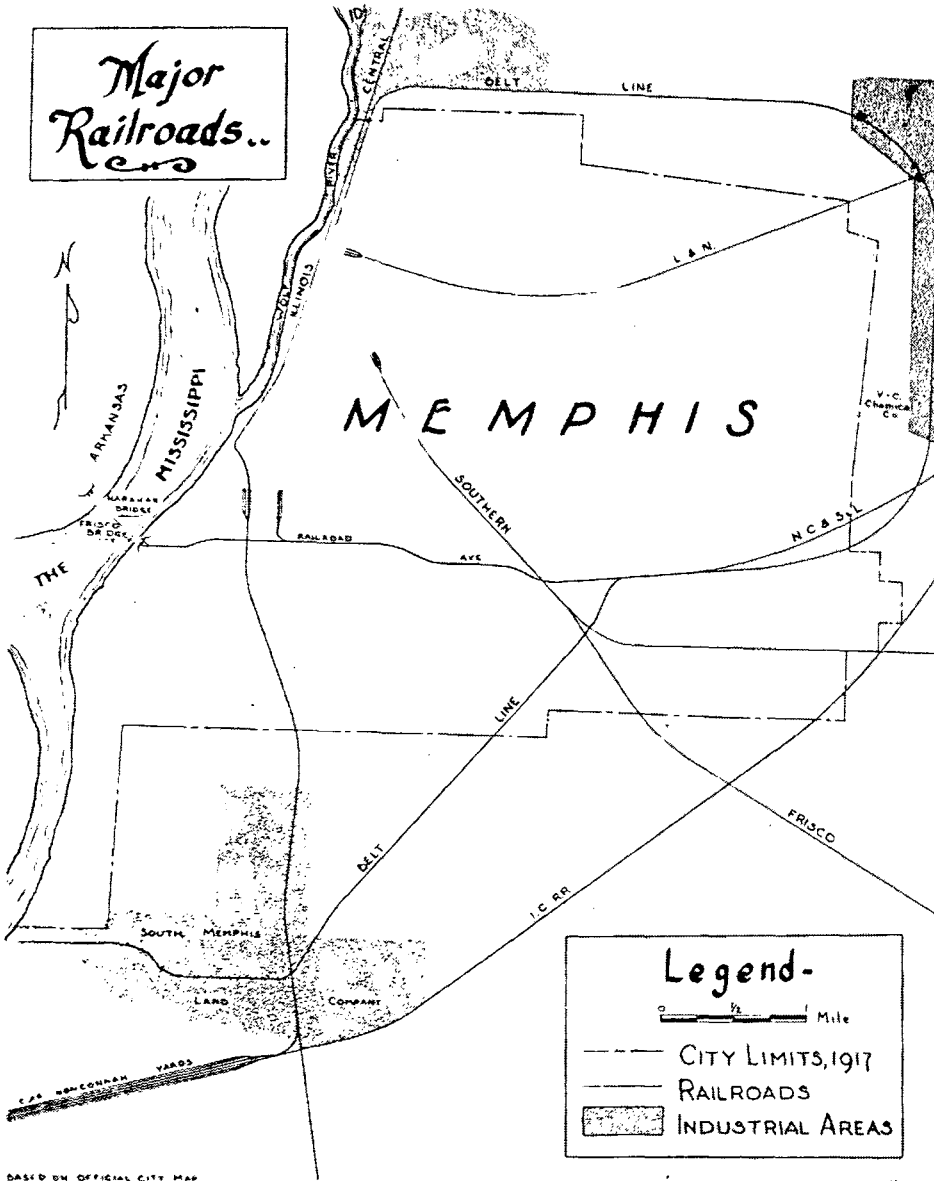
With the decline of the Industrial League, the Business Men's Club, which had been founded in 1900 to co-ordinate and represent the interests of some of the business organizations of the city, took over the job of attracting investment capital. Between 1905 and 1913 the club, using the same techniques as the Industrial League, widely advertised the investment opportunities offered by Memphis. In January, 1913, the Business Men's Club became a member of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, to gain national support in promoting the city's industrial growth.<sup>39</sup>

In advertising the advantages of Memphis, promotional organizations usually stressed the city's ample supply of artesian water, its climate, with a high percentage of clear days and "generally moderate temperature," and the availability of more than twenty types of timber and mineral resources suitable for industrial use within a five hundred-mile radius of the city.<sup>40</sup>

Another attraction emphasized was the availability of industrial sites. In 1902 the South Memphis Land Company was organized to provide inexpensive locations for industry in an area about three miles south of Memphis proper. In 1904 the opening of the Nonconnah yards of the Illinois Central Railroad prompted the Memphis Street Railway Company to extend a line into the area, making it more accessible. By 1906 twenty-three large manufacturing plants had located there and were employing nearly four thousand persons.<sup>41</sup>

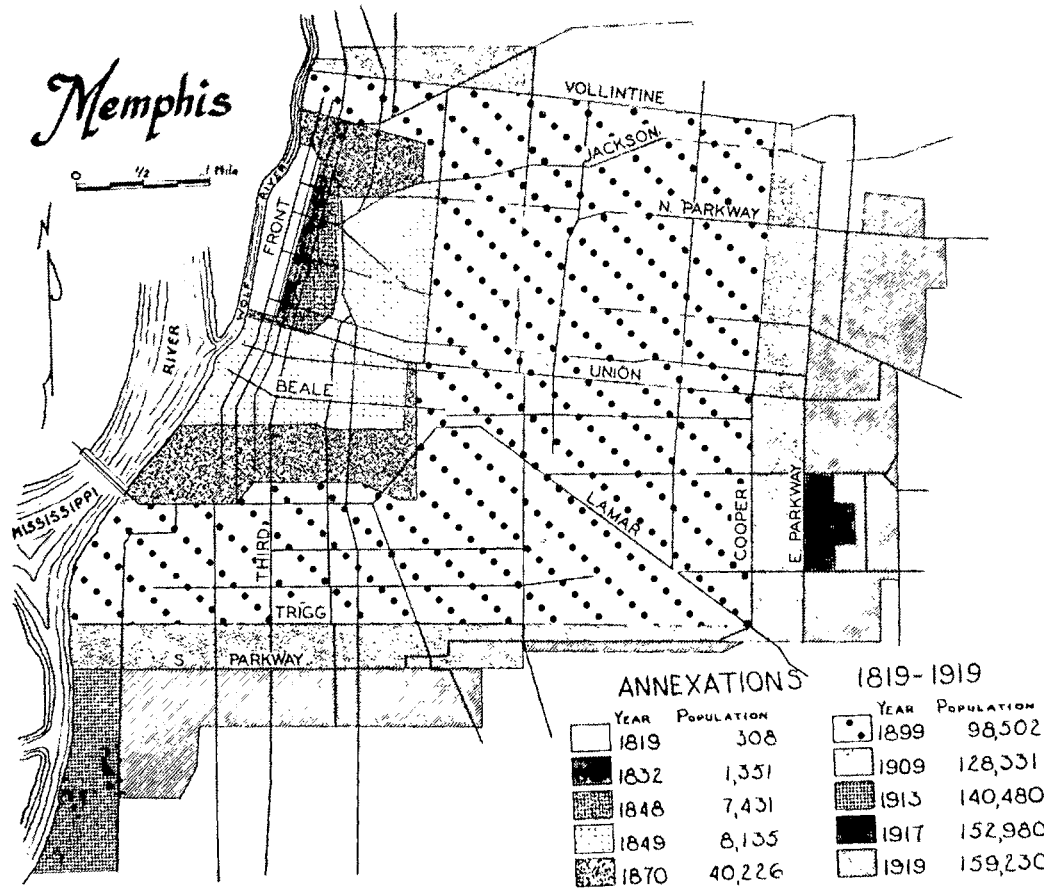
Also in 1904 an even wider area of industrial sites was opened up by the construction of a railroad belt line in a semi-circle around the city. Skirting the outlying manufacturing districts, it penetrated with spur tracks the new South Memphis area and the Wolf River lumber section on the North. The idea had originated in 1886 with Memphis businessmen and was pushed

# Major Railroads..



BASED ON OFFICIAL CITY MAP

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as a local project. Initially, Napoleon Hill, D. W. Fly, John W. Dillard, and Henry Banks, all prominent in the city's business life, were the principal stockholders in the million dollar enterprise. Plans had moved to the point where the city government had granted the company's application for a franchise, when the Panic of 1893 halted them. In 1899 the scheme was revived by Hu L. Brinkley, a Memphis capitalist, who succeeded in interesting George Gould. Gould, son of Jay Gould and inheritor of his father's railroad empire, was in a position to place enough capital behind the project to bring it to completion.<sup>42</sup> Then as industry developed, much of it located along the belt line, although South Memphis continued to be the largest single area of industrial concentration.

Undoubtedly the strongest factor in prompting Northern industrialists to consider Memphis as an area to which they might profitably move was the docility and cheapness of Memphis labor. During the industrial and commercial expansion of the eighties, the rural areas gave up a large number of workers to the city—people who were glad to escape at any price the drabness of rural life. The *Commercial Appeal* editorialized that "Memphis can save the Northern manufacturer . . . who employs 400 hands, \$50,000 a year on his labor bill."<sup>43</sup> "Our advantage," the writer continued, "is the negro . . . and there is no race problem at all." The Business Men's Club advertised that common labor in Memphis received 15 cents per hour, while the Pittsburgh rate was 16 cents. It noted "Field men are paid 50 cents per hour, as against the Pittsburgh and New York scale of 60 cents," while the American Snuff Company of Memphis paid its working girls only \$6 to \$10 per week. Even so, according to the Business Men's Club, the worker's position was not a mean one. It argued the "social standing of the workman in Memphis is higher than in the North," that in Memphis the worker was "distinctly the middle class citizen, which can hardly be said of the Northern and Eastern indus-

trial centers. . . . Therefore he is better off in Memphis." Nor did the worker suffer from an inferior standard of living because of lower wages, continued the advertisement, since he "saved much" on the cost of housing, fuel, and clothing.<sup>44</sup>

Stressing the docility of Memphis labor, the Business Men's Club said it gave "absolutely no trouble of any kind" and cited the experience of the Weis and Lesh Manufacturing Company, an Ohio concern that had moved to Memphis.<sup>45</sup> In the entire eight-year history of the company's location in the city, said the club, "they have had no difficulty, even so much as threatened . . . and . . . the wage scale in Memphis is lower than at any of the former locations."

In 1913 the Business Men's Club became the Chamber of Commerce, and this new organization attributed the excellent state of labor relations to the fact that "practically all Memphis labor, whether white or colored, is all American. . . . Such conditions make for loyalty on the part of the employees to the government and to their employers."<sup>46</sup>

This boast had a basis in fact. The Memphis working class, between the turn of the century and the first World War, engaged in none of the activities of militant unionism. During this period the labor movement consisted of between twenty-five and thirty American Federation of Labor unions, joined in a Trades and Labor Council.<sup>47</sup> The activities of the council were principally social and fraternal, although an organization known as the Labor League, a kind of political appendix to the council, sometimes endorsed candidates for political office.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, "sweet harmony" was emphasized from all quarters in describing the relationship between capital and labor. In 1901 Mayor Williams, speaking at the opening of the union Labor Temple in the old quarters of the Chickasaw Club on Second Street, challenged anyone to point out another city in the United States where capital and labor were so closely allied.<sup>49</sup> In another speech, E. F. Grace, editor of the Memphis *United Labor*

*Journal*, expressed the mild temper of the city's labor movement when he observed that "Capital must be treated with consideration and must be given the same privileges that labor took unto itself."<sup>50</sup> Grace regretted the necessity of strikes, which he thought were not caused by capital but by ignorance in both capital and labor.

One of the great handicaps to the expansion of labor organization in the North was the multitude of foreign immigrant workers whom capital could keep disunited by playing upon the national antagonisms they had brought over from the Old World. Memphis did not have this problem, but it had the even more difficult one of the Negro. While many types of occupations were reserved exclusively for Negroes, there were others in which both Negro and white competed for employment. Since the Negro was generally excluded from unions, and he was willing to work for lower wages than white workers, his presence in the labor market acted to depress wages.

Another factor that handicapped the work of unions was the conservatism of the Memphis working class. Predominantly rural in origin, its members were slow to embrace the ideas of labor solidarity and militant unionism, and what progress labor organizers might have made with them was constantly being undermined by the continuing influx of more of their kind.

The tractable disposition of the Memphis laborer, and his willingness to work for relatively low wages was one of the factors that encouraged some of the city's advocates of industry in another idea: to emulate the Piedmont Plateau cities of the South in attracting cotton textile industries.

In March, 1898, D. A. Tomkins of Charlotte, North Carolina, an energetic promoter of cotton and cotton products industries for the South, visited Memphis. He pointed out that the accessibility of cotton, low transportation rates, cheap coal, and cheap labor pre-eminently qualified Memphis as a center for cotton textile production.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the *Commercial Appeal*

asked editorially that the Merchants Exchange send a delegation to the state industrial convention to be held in Nashville to place the city's bid for cotton mills.<sup>52</sup> The plan proved fruitless and two years later E. B. Miller, the secretary of the Industrial League, who opposed cotton mills, stated that "We boast of marketing here 800,000 bales of cotton, yet do not manufacture a single bale."<sup>53</sup> In 1909, the Business Men's Club initiated a movement to establish cotton mills.<sup>54</sup> But despite the apparent advantages of Memphis for cotton textile manufacturing the city was incapable of attracting any major mill or of sustaining the few small ventures that were started.<sup>55</sup>

The failure was blamed on the inability of Memphis to grant special tax concessions to the mill interests.<sup>56</sup> According to the Tennessee Constitution, only the state government, not the cities, could grant special taxing privileges. Another handicap was that owners of cotton mills usually made the purchase of mill stock by local capitalists a condition to their locating in Memphis. And local businessmen, while publicly extolling the advantages of Memphis for textile manufacturing, privately were chary about investing their money in undertakings of this kind. A record of failures of mills established in the eighties created an overriding reluctance to invest in new ones. It is likely, too, that in the several instances that cotton mills were put into operation failures were due largely to poor management, antiquated machinery, and unskilled labor.<sup>57</sup>

While expectations in the field of cotton manufacturing proved to be unrealistic, the growth that Memphis made in its other manufacturing enterprises was so considerable that by 1910 manufacturing had come to rival commerce as a source of the city's wealth. Even so, commerce continued to be an integral part of the city's economic life.

The cotton trade, in which Memphis served as a national and international entrepôt, dominated the picture. When the Reverend Carter Helm Jones visited Memphis in the fall of 1898

and was asked his impressions of the city's spiritual condition, he replied that it was not the "best time to get a correct idea of Memphis from the religious standpoint because you are in the midst of the cotton season. . . . I have found the world, the flesh, and the devil enthroned here." <sup>58</sup> The good man well expressed the degree to which cotton permeated all phases of the city's life. "Cotton made Memphis a city. It made the town's first rich men and paid for their mansions." <sup>59</sup> And down through the twentieth century, as industrialists joined the city's aristocracy, an association with cotton was almost necessary to be a member of the real elite. In Memphis cotton, despite chronic poor health, refused "to make a will or discuss a funeral." <sup>60</sup>

The supremacy of cotton was a natural consequence of the city's location in the center of one of the greatest cotton growing regions in the United States. Every grade and style of cotton known to the trade, except Sea Island cotton, was raised within a radius of 150 miles of Memphis. During the eighties and nineties the Yazoo Delta, through a program of drainage and levee construction, was converted from useless swamp land into highly fertile cotton acreage, adding considerably to the volume of cotton handled in the Memphis market. <sup>61</sup> Cotton receipts at Memphis during the commercial year ending August 31, 1899, were 785,850 bales valued at \$20,982,195 and represented 7 per cent of the total amount marketed in the United States. <sup>62</sup> During the next twenty years the number of bales handled in the Memphis market showed no spectacular increase, but a generally steady rise in the price of cotton brought their value in 1920 to over \$100,000,000. <sup>63</sup>

The marketing of cotton during the first two decades of the twentieth century was directed by a key man, the cotton factor. He was more than a marketing agent; he was the prime mover of the whole cotton cycle, from the time of planting until the baled cotton was shipped to the mill. He was, moreover, the focal point in the credit system that characterized the economy



of the postwar rural South. A historian of the city's economic life has given an account of how the system worked in Memphis:

In return for a mortgage on the planter's land or crop the factor advanced him, at a rate rarely less than 10 per cent and often more, the credit necessary to purchase seed, supplies and labor. Though interest was charged on the full amount from the date of contract until the cotton was sold, little money was used in the transaction, for the factor merely advanced goods on account as they were needed. All cotton produced was turned over to him, and he arranged for its sale in consideration of a brokerage fee of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Should a balance remain after interest charges and other fees were subtracted, it was returned to the planter, who in turn was forced to adopt this same method in dealing with his tenants.<sup>64</sup>

The financial lot of the factor was rarely a hard one. Since cotton had to be marketed, irrespective of its price, the factor's income was assured and relatively stable. In Memphis the big names in cotton, the Hills, the Norfleets, and the Fontaines, were prominently connected with other phases of business life, as directors and officers in the financial institutions of the city. In the social hierarchy of Memphis the factor stood at the top. Many of the factors had plantations of their own, and their social status was enhanced by the tradition of gentility that comes from an association with planting interests.

The factorage system continued to dominate the cotton trade until the first World War, although three developments threatened its power. The boll weevil increased the risk of the factors' loans to growers. Federal legislation initiated by the Wilson administration gave growers and county dealers cheaper bank credit so they were less dependent on the factor. Improvements in country roads gave mill buyers access to the plantations so they could buy their cotton directly. By 1920 a new group of agents had appeared—shippers, "spot" brokers, and "f.o.b." men, who took over the movement of large amounts of cotton from farm to mill.<sup>65</sup>

Early in the development of the cotton trade there had arisen a need for an agency to control marketing operations and in

1874 the Memphis Cotton Exchange was organized. The Exchange "absolutely" controlled the cotton dealings of the Memphis merchant and provided for arbitration of any differences that arose among its members over sales, delivery, or character of the cotton prescribed in sales contracts.<sup>66</sup> Arbitration became the Exchange's most important function, and a permanent arbitration committee was eventually established. Another important service provided by the Exchange was the gathering of statistical information on the cotton trade, published yearly in the Exchange's annual report.<sup>67</sup>

Since income from cotton reflected directly in the farmer's purchasing power in the Memphis market, all Memphis businessmen were interested in cotton prices. The nineties were generally poor years for the cotton farmer, when the price of cotton seldom went above \$30 per bale. Indeed, in 1898, when the price of some cotton in the Memphis market sunk to 4 cents a pound, catastrophe seemed to threaten the farmer. The *Commercial Appeal* called for a cotton congress to effect a voluntary reduction of crops, but the suggestion was met with such skepticism that it never developed beyond the editorial page.<sup>68</sup> After 1900 the cotton farmer was relieved by an increase in price of cotton, but he was never certain that a relapse would not occur. In 1910 the Business Men's Club brought to Memphis Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, who had successfully initiated farm demonstrations of techniques to remedy the boll-weevil problem, and who had urged crop diversification to alleviate the problems created by overproduction.<sup>69</sup> Although by no means a new idea, diversification was the most practical one proposed. From time to time the *Commercial Appeal* endorsed Knapp's proposal. "We must have better farming," it said, "for the reason that so long as our people grow cotton only and buy what they eat from the North and East, the profit from cotton will go out of the South."<sup>70</sup> But more than editorial sermons were needed to solve the cotton problem. The relative prosperity of the cotton farmer during the

first two decades of the twentieth century was due to bettering world market conditions and a world war, rather than to any change in agrarian practices.

Memphis was first of all a national and international cotton center. But another kind of commerce developed as the city became a regional distribution center for a variety of other commodities. Through the city flowed an increasingly large amount of goods, produced elsewhere in the country, on their way to the countryside around Memphis. Until the 1880's Memphis distributed goods to a small commercial hinterland extending only a short distance back from the banks of the Mississippi. Then the distribution area began to grow and during the late nineties it reached out on a 100-mile radius from Memphis. The market for the city's traders expanded as the population increased in this area from 28.7 persons per square mile in 1880 to 57.2 per square mile in 1930.<sup>71</sup>

The wholesale grocery business formed the major trade of this kind. Because the St. Louis grocery business extended into the country to the north, the Memphis grocery trade was directed mainly to the south, into Mississippi and across the river into eastern Arkansas. By 1900, thirty-one Memphis houses were carrying on an annual trade of more than \$6,000,000.<sup>72</sup>

Memphis was also the center of a considerable wholesale dry-goods business, which in the years preceding and following the turn of the century was dominated by one firm—the William R. Moore Company.<sup>73</sup> Other important goods in the Memphis wholesale trade were drugs and livestock. The Hessig-Ellis Drug Company and the large Van Vleet-Mansville Drug Company contributed to a business that was worth nearly \$3,000,000 annually.<sup>74</sup> In the livestock trade Memphis ranked as one of the leading mule markets of the country, selling between twenty and thirty thousand animals per year.<sup>75</sup>

Attending the development of industry and commerce was a considerable expansion of the city's rail facilities. This ex-

pansion occurred during the eighties and was effected principally by the consolidation of a number of struggling local lines into larger systems. In 1881 the Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern took over a local company and completed the road which for some years it had been striving to build to Paducah, Kentucky, thus providing another route to the East. Particularly, Memphis needed transportation outlets to the West. In 1888, and in 1891, respectively, the construction of the Iron Mountain and the Cotton Belt routes provided a means for commercial penetration into the trans-Mississippi territory. Through the consolidations effected by the Illinois Central system, Memphis became a link in the commercial flow of the Mississippi Valley from Chicago to New Orleans. During the nineties two lines extending along the Mississippi through the Yazoo Delta to Vicksburg, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, along with a small line to Grenada, Mississippi, were consolidated into the Illinois Central system.<sup>76</sup>

Of the various rail systems that contributed to the growth of Memphis in the early twentieth century, the Illinois Central played a leading role. Much of the credit for its part in developing not only Memphis but much of the central South, was due to one of its officials, James T. Harahan. He was a native of Massachusetts who became interested in the South and lived there most of his life. In 1890 Harahan became the second vice-president of the company, and for the next sixteen years, as the head of the operating department, he exercised a strong influence on the policies of the corporation. It was largely the result of Harahan's influence that some roads were brought into the Illinois Central network. He was likewise instrumental in making the Illinois Central line through Memphis the main trunk line of the railroad, thus assuring the city's becoming one of the railroad's most important terminal and supply centers.<sup>77</sup> In 1899 Harahan provided Memphis with a major social event when he married the daughter of Captain William B. Mallory, head of the house

of W. B. Mallory and Sons, wholesale grocers. His services to Memphis were recognized when a new bridge spanning the Mississippi at Memphis was named for him.<sup>78</sup>

As the new century progressed the city benefited from additional rail connections and by the time of the first World War it was served by eleven trunk lines. In its "Prosperity Edition" of December 30, 1913, the *Commercial Appeal* claimed that Memphis handled more in and out freight than any other Southern city.

Once the railroads had entered Memphis, steps were taken to see that they were properly supervised. Business interests and the city government joined forces to assure fair treatment of Memphis commerce and to curb rate discrimination. In 1895 the city's commercial interests organized the Memphis Freight Bureau to study transportation problems and to supervise the city government's non-discriminatory rate clauses that were required of the roads when contracts were made for terminal facilities. The initiators of the agency were three businessmen, Hugh Petit, J. N. Brooks, and J. S. Davant. Davant served as executive director of the bureau from the time of its founding until his death in 1935, and it was principally to his efforts and ability that the bureau owed its success. The main concern of the bureau was securing equitable freight rates on goods going from Memphis to other regions.<sup>79</sup> At its annual meeting in January, 1902, the bureau reported a season of success in revising railroad rates both in and out of Memphis.<sup>80</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* stated that rate reductions had been around 40 per cent on all classes of freight except cotton and lumber and acclaimed the accomplishment as "the greatest commercial triumph of the last ten years."<sup>81</sup>

The city government, besides putting non-discrimination clauses in its contracts with the lines, further helped the cause of good shipping facilities by requiring each road to switch for every other road. The Business Men's Club asserted: "In no

other city of the country do railroads switch as freely for each other on interchange of business as they do in Memphis.”<sup>82</sup>

Memphis' rail system by 1917 was well adapted for quick and economical connections with the North and East. The Business Men's Club claimed that a manufacturer in any one of the North Central states could ship a carload of his product to Memphis, at the carload rate, then re-ship at the higher less-than-carload rates to any one of the states south or west of Memphis, and in every instance find his total rates lower than they would have been had he shipped direct via another route from the place of manufacture to the place of distribution.<sup>83</sup>

The favorable freight rates enjoyed by Memphis were not the result of that kind of government regulation that characterized the progressive era and the earlier populist era. Business in Memphis worked through the city government, which was sympathetic to its interests, to keep the rates low for the sake of a more profitable commerce rather than for a cause of economic justice. It was simply good business to lower the rates. And Memphis was able to keep them low because of a strong natural advantage—the Mississippi River. The possibility of shipping by water instead of by rail gave force to the arguments Memphis businessmen presented to the railroads.

By the turn of the century the golden era of the paddle-steamer was nearing an end, but twenty-two steamboat lines were still engaged in shipping in and out of Memphis. The largest of them were the Lee Line, the St. Louis and Tennessee River Packet Company, and the Memphis and Vicksburg Packet Company. These were passenger and freight carrying lines, with cotton, cottonseed, and grain furnishing the greater part of the tonnage.

When construction of the Panama Canal began, it was expected that the Mississippi would become one of the main arteries of commerce leading to the canal. Anticipating the completion of the project, the Lakes-to-the-Gulf Deep Water-

ways Association held its second annual convention in Memphis in the fall of 1907.<sup>84</sup> The convention opened October 4, with President Roosevelt and twenty governors in attendance. The *Commercial Appeal* enthusiastically called it the "greatest gathering in the history of the South."<sup>85</sup> Resolutions were adopted calling for a deep waterway from Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico to handle "the vast tonnage supplied by the increased output of the mines, farms, and factories of the Mississippi valley. . . ." It was pointed out that the proposed inland waterway would act as a "potent regulator" on railroad freight rates.<sup>86</sup> In his address to the delegates Roosevelt stressed the fact that much money had been spent on the Mississippi, but improvements had not been undertaken with a unified purpose. He advocated a planned development of inland waterways with the federal government taking the lead.

The roseate expectations of a revival of commercial traffic on the Mississippi were never fully realized; there was no wresting away from the railroads the gains they had made. By 1920 the river steamer had become almost extinct, and barges increasingly took over the job of carrying river freight. Nevertheless, the river continued to have a depressant effect on railroad rates. Barge traffic could always be expanded if rail rates increased.

Expansion of industry and trade were accompanied by an expansion and consolidation of the city's financial institutions. By the turn of the century the banking business of Memphis was well on the way toward being dominated by the "big three," the First National Bank of Memphis,<sup>87</sup> the Union and Planters National Bank and Trust Company, and the National Bank of Commerce. The First National, organized in 1864 under the provisions of the National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864, was the oldest of the three.<sup>88</sup> It was the Union and Planters organization, however, that capitalized most on the city's economic expansion during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1906 it absorbed the Tennesseec Trust Company, and twelve

years later took over the Mercantile National Bank—moves that increased its capitalization to over \$28,000,000. Much of the success of the Union and Planters Bank during these years was due to aggressive leadership and to the institution's connection with the wealth of the Hill family. Napoleon Hill, whose cotton factoring business built the family fortune, was one of the bank's first directors when it was organized in 1869 and later served as its president. In 1915 his son, Frank Hill, became head of the organization and managed its affairs until 1923.<sup>89</sup> The growth of the Union and Planters Bank was based on conservative business principles, as, in fact, was that of the two other leading banks of the city. All three weathered without difficulty the panics of 1893 and 1907, and doubtless their reputation for stability was a factor in attracting investment capital to Memphis.

Memphis made more progress in the three decades preceding the United States' entry into the first World War than it had in any period of its previous history. Even a casual observer could see that the city had been transformed from a small river town into a booming industrial city. But the progress was economic, materialistic, produced by the machine, and while it solved some problems it created new ones. To deal with them the city turned increasingly to social and political reforms in the spirit of the progressive era.



## CHAPTER FOUR

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### *Expanding City Services*

DURING THE TWO DECADES following the yellow fever epidemic of 1878–1879, the city had enjoyed a physical and economic growth that made expansion of its boundaries and extension and modernization of its public services a necessity. The “Greater Memphis” movement, which sought both goals, was led by forward-looking men with a faith in the future of the city, who were convinced they could be achieved without burdening the city with an unmanageable debt. Opposing these goals, or at best supporting them with considerable caution, were men of conservative disposition who remembered the dark days of 1879 when the bankrupt city had been forced to surrender its charter and become a taxing district of the state.

Expansion became an issue in the mayoralty election of 1898, when John Joseph Williams challenged the incumbent, Lucas Clapp. For a year or more the annexation of populated areas adjacent to the city had been advocated by a number of civic leaders. Two thoughts seemed to have been uppermost in their minds. The first and weightiest was the conviction that future epidemics could be forestalled only by extending modern sanitary measures to all populated areas near the city. The other

was a consideration of the increased prestige that would come to the city by adding approximately thirty thousand people to its population.

Since the movement for expansion had been initiated during the administration of Mayor Clapp, and since his administration had been honest and efficient, the ardently expansionist *Commercial Appeal* urged the mayor's re-election. Williams, it charged, had acted "suspicious and irregular in several ways" and his defeat was regarded as an "imperative necessity."<sup>1</sup> And Williams seemed only lukewarm for expansion. Editorial counseling proved to be in vain; Williams won, probably through the manipulation of an estimated two thousand Negro votes, as his opponents charged.<sup>2</sup>

Williams proved to be an astute politician. Of rural origin, he was born in Fayette County, Tennessee, and came to Memphis as a child. As a young man he entered business, but soon thereafter he took the position of cashier in the office of the county trustee. In 1888 he was elected county trustee and stood successfully three successive elections for this office until becoming mayor.<sup>3</sup>

As a candidate, Williams' position on expansion was not so well defined as Clapp's, but whatever doubt the public may have had about it was soon dispelled by the aggressive manner in which he espoused it after becoming mayor. Meetings of citizens were called to propose new boundaries, and after considerable debate the city's Legislative Council adopted a plan to incorporate into the city the two outlying suburban communities of Idlewild and Madison Heights, which lay close to one another just outside the city's eastern boundary.<sup>4</sup> Because of the health problem, immediate annexation was regarded as imperative. To make the new bounds legal, a state enabling act was required, so the Shelby County delegation to the State Legislature sought, and succeeded in effecting, a call for a special session. The enacted law was signed by Governor Bob Taylor on

February 1. The closing article of the act stated that annexation was to take place immediately because the interest of the public demanded it.<sup>5</sup>

Although the sentiment of the city favored annexation, there were disgruntled people in the territory to be annexed who vigorously opposed it. Mainly, they were persons of wealth who objected to the increase in taxes that would follow. The *Commercial Appeal* testily accused these people of being unwilling to pay for the healthier community they would gain and pointed out if annexation were frustrated it would result in the suspension of work on sewers and leave the city unprotected from invasion by disease.<sup>6</sup>

A few of these dissident property holders succeeded in having the annexation law declared unconstitutional, and so nullified the expansionist effort of 1898. Section III of the annexation act provided that the annexed territory should be exempt from taxation for the police department, the fire department, and the street lighting department for ten years, and that the city should not be required to provide these services for the annexed territory. The State Supreme Court voided the annexation law because it precluded the new district from sharing equally in municipal services.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, annexation sentiment persisted, and the threat of a fever epidemic in the late summer of 1898 strengthened the movement.<sup>8</sup> Again groups of interested citizens gathered to debate proposals for a new boundary. Then the city decided that the new area to be incorporated would extend approximately to a line made up of Vollintine Avenue on the north, Cooper Avenue on the east, and Trigg Avenue on the south.<sup>9</sup>

In November the new "people's line" was submitted to residents of the new territory for acceptance or rejection. While annexation was overwhelmingly approved, another group of people, living south of the Idlewild community, continued to oppose their incorporation into the city and in December they

constituted themselves the town of Manila and elected a mayor, a magistrate, and a chief of police.<sup>10</sup> This action was a short-lived attempt to frustrate incorporation. Just a little over a week after Manila's citizens received their charter, Mayor Williams boarded a train for the state capital carrying in his briefcase bills endorsed by the Legislative Council to repeal the charters of Idlewild, Madison Heights, and Manila, and another bill to "Extend and Change the Corporate Limits of Memphis."<sup>11</sup> In January, 1899, Governor Benton McMillen signed the bills extending the city limits to those lines approved in the boundary election of the previous November.<sup>12</sup>

The expansion of 1899 was significant in many ways. It was not only the greatest single expansion that the city had made, but it marked the first and only time that all the land boundaries were moved outward at the same time. The growth of nineteenth-century Memphis had tended to produce an elongated pattern of development because of the importance of the river for transportation. Now the shape of the city became square, a development made possible by the growing use of rail transportation.<sup>13</sup> Later annexations in 1909, 1913, 1917, and 1919 further enlarged the square. Finally, the expansion made possible the marshalling of the financial resources necessary to extend urban services into the new area. This could not have been accomplished in an atmosphere of doubt over Memphis' economic future or its ability to escape future epidemics of yellow fever.

Expansion was not the only concern of the "Greater Memphis" movement. In the mood of urban progressivism, it also favored an extension and modernization of public service institutions, both privately and publicly owned.

One of the principal reasons why suburban residents had voted to be incorporated into the city was to avail themselves of the health protection afforded by city sewers. It had been assumed, somewhat incorrectly, that the great epidemic of 1878—

1879 had been caused by the lack of sewers.<sup>14</sup> So the first demand after the epidemic was for construction of a comprehensive system of sewers. Between 1878 and 1899 the city constructed approximately forty-five miles of sewers, prompting the *Commercial Appeal* to comment that the year 1898 "finds Memphis admirably . . . sewered throughout the city limits, enforcing an intelligent and thorough system of sanitation and rigidly observing the laws of health."<sup>15</sup>

The 1898 epidemic threat alarmed the people who had come to feel that the weak point in the city's health system was the outlying unsewered areas. So with annexation accomplished, the primary concern of the city government was the extension of sewers into the new areas.

The immediate extension of a sewerage system into the annexed areas was contingent upon the construction of water mains to flush the sewers, and this need held up sewer construction for more than six months. Although the Artesian Water Company offered to build the mains, it set forth as a condition that changes be made in its contract with the city to safeguard its investment.<sup>16</sup> An exchange of proposals and counter-proposals between the Council and the directors of the water company failed to result in agreement until a compromise suggestion was made by Mayor Williams: that the existing contract be allowed to stand, with the added provision that the city aid the company financially in the construction of mains and that the company pay a rebate on excess profits to the city.<sup>17</sup> The company agreed.

The city was now in a position to resume work on sewers and this it did vigorously. By the end of the year thirty-five miles had been added to the system, and by 1900 an additional twenty-five miles. The twenty-eight miles laid in 1901 completed the sewerage of the city.<sup>18</sup>

The vexations caused the city by the water company in the sewer expansion led the government, in the manner of the pro-

gressive era, to consider public ownership of this utility. A company-city contract of 1887 had given the city the right to buy the company, and in May, 1902, as the time approached for the expiration of this contract, the matter was placed before a committee of the Legislative Council for study. A recommendation of purchase followed, and in July the council employed a board of experts to investigate the feasibility of purchase.<sup>19</sup> Two water engineers and the accounting firm of Haskins and Sells of New York were employed to make a report on the condition and capacity of the company plant, its actual worth, and the cost of a new plant using Mississippi River water. Also, they were to compile a comparison of water rates in Memphis with those of other cities of the same class.<sup>20</sup>

In November the council's water committee, having studied the reports of the engineers and accountants, made public its findings and strongly urged municipal ownership. Immediately the Legislative Council entered into negotiations with the Artesian Water Company to purchase its property.<sup>21</sup> Judge T. J. Latham, president of the company, offered to sell its holdings for \$1,000,000 cash, with the city assuming a \$1,250,000 mortgage.<sup>22</sup> It was substantially upon these terms that the city made the purchase, the transaction being closed May 29, 1903.<sup>23</sup>

The purchase of the water plant fulfilled the expectations of its advocates, for a little over a year after purchase a 20 per cent reduction in water rates was effected.<sup>24</sup>

The water company was the only public utility that the city took over in this period, although there was to be recurring agitation for a municipally owned electric plant. While demands for public ownership of utilities were not the consequence of conscious progressive thinking, since there was no clearly defined progressive thinking in Memphis as yet, they fit into the mold of progressivism as historians have defined it.

The concern for public ownership that was manifested in the case of water, and later of electricity, did not exist for gas. The

probable reason for this was that gas was being superseded by electricity for home and street lighting purposes, and that after 1900 gas rates in Memphis declined. By virtue of the franchise granting and control prerogatives contained in its charter, the city permitted mergers of gas companies that resulted in lower rates, since mergers eliminated the necessity of duplicating transmission facilities. Between 1898 and 1905 the price of gas was almost halved.<sup>25</sup> In 1899 the New Memphis Gas Light Company sold out to the Equitable Gas Light Company, a combination encouraged by the Legislative Council.<sup>26</sup> A further merger occurred in 1903 when the Equitable Gas Company, owned by a New York syndicate, consolidated with the Memphis Light and Power company, the latter concern having already passed into the hands of the same syndicate in 1901.<sup>27</sup> Since both companies were owned by the same group, the fiction of competing agencies was difficult to maintain, and they were merged. The new company, called the Memphis Consolidated Gas and Electric Company, served the city until the formation of the Memphis Power and Light Company in 1919.

Although control of the Consolidated Company was in the hands of New York capitalists, three Memphis businessmen, Jacob Marks, Frank Graham Jones, and Sam T. Carnes, held substantial amounts of its stock. Carnes and Jones held one-tenth each, and Carnes became first vice-president of the company.<sup>28</sup> In the history of utility development of the period, Carnes played a prominent role, and he was, in many respects, typical of the "success story" that entranced Americans at the turn of the century. Because of straitened circumstances his education consisted of but one year of schooling before the Civil War and one year after. He served his business apprenticeship as a bookkeeper in the Savings Bank of Memphis and in several cotton firms until he entered business for himself in 1878. In that year he secured from the Bell Telephone Company the right to build an exchange in Memphis and shortly afterwards

he organized the Memphis Telephone Company. In 1883 he organized under the Brush patent the Brush Electric Light and Power Company.<sup>29</sup> The following year he sold his telephone interests and in 1890 consolidated the Brush Company with the Memphis Thomson-Houston Company as the Memphis Light and Power Company. It was this latter concern that was sold to the New York syndicate in 1901.<sup>30</sup>

Despite mergers and cheaper gas rates, agitation for public ownership of electric power plants continued, principally, it seems, because of the resentment over the control of Memphis power by outside capital.<sup>31</sup> In January, 1905, the Shelby County delegation to the State Legislature initiated a bill permitting Memphis to increase its bonded indebtedness by as much as \$10,000,000 to purchase its own electric light plant. In its enacted form, however, the bill was so hedged with restrictions that it was not used.<sup>32</sup>

Another forward step taken by the city during this period was the passage of a conduit ordinance requiring all wire-using corporations to place their installations underground.<sup>33</sup> Most American cities during the nineties were vexed by a confusion of overhead wires that were pre-empted by birds for roosting places and which frequently interfered with the efficient use of fire-fighting apparatus. By 1902 most of the overhead wires had been replaced by underground systems.<sup>34</sup>

The effects of the "Greater Memphis" movement could be observed also in the extensive changes that took place in public transportation. The street railway service at the beginning of the nineties was described as "two lines of rust not much larger than a lightning rod, between which was a towpath of gravel or a series of planks" and along which ran cars pulled by "an industrious little mule with the tingling sheep bell hanging from its hame strings."<sup>35</sup> A journey across the city was an adventure, since it could never be predicted when or in what condition the traveler would reach his destination.



In 1890 the first step in the transformation of the street railway system from mule to electric power was taken by the Citizen's Street Railway Company. In 1893 the owner of that concern, A. M. Billings, began an improvement of the system and placed Frank Graham Jones in charge as vice-president and general manager. Jones was brought to Memphis from Burlington, Iowa, where he had managed a street railway. Under his management the East End Road, then a dummy line, the City and Suburban, and the Memphis and Raleigh Springs line were purchased and consolidated with the Citizen's Street Railway Company into the Memphis Street Railway Company.<sup>36</sup> By 1900 the company had added about seventy miles of track to the thirty miles that existed in 1890. It operated about seventy-five cars over seventeen routes. Improvement was noted even in the changing attitude of motormen and conductors, who, it was said, were becoming "polite and attentive."<sup>37</sup>

In 1903 Jones announced that the company was going to spend \$175,000 on further improvements. Lines were to be extended, and new and refitted cars to be added, but the news that probably brought the greatest joy to riders was the announcement that wheels that had become misshapen with long use would be removed and that new round wheels would be installed.<sup>38</sup>

The Memphis street railway system, like other profitable public enterprises, was soon to pass into the hands of a Northern syndicate. In 1905 C. K. G. Billings, son of A. M. Billings, and Frank Graham Jones sold their holdings to a New York group for \$2,500,000.<sup>39</sup> Local representation was provided on the directorate by the inclusion of two Memphis businessmen, John R. Pepper, president of the Tennessee Trust Company, and John H. Watkins, vice-president of the Memphis Trust Company.<sup>40</sup>

While Memphis' sewerage, water, power, and transportation systems were modernized, one city service resisted the currents

of progress. For at least a decade after the turn of the century the streets of Memphis remained as they had been in the eighties and nineties: "winding ponds, canals of mud and water, in which heavy vehicles are stalled, and through which pedestrians cannot make their way."<sup>41</sup> In 1902 the *Commercial Appeal* observed that "the crying need of Memphis today is improved streets."<sup>42</sup>

In 1900 Memphis had approximately 175 miles of streets, twelve of which were variously paved with stone, brick, and wooden blocks, while the remainder were of dirt or gravel construction.<sup>43</sup> They provoked repeated critical comment in the press. In 1903 when a more thorough examination of the problem was made, the *Commercial Appeal* thought it detected a genuine "Good Streets Movement."<sup>44</sup> Lacking funds, the city could hardly do more than investigate the problem. A report by J. A. Omberg, the city engineer, estimated that \$4,000,000 would be needed to pave defective streets and predicted that if something were not done immediately the city would have only eight miles of serviceable streets three years thereafter. Mayor Williams acted by issuing two hundred invitations to the most prominent taxpayers to meet with members of the Legislative Council to discuss plans of action.<sup>45</sup>

The good streets movement turned out to be a fleeting mood, for the only solution to the problem was higher taxes which "prominent taxpayers" opposed. By 1905 street construction had progressed so slowly that Memphis had only twenty-two miles that were hard surfaced, a condition appearing even worse because Nashville, with its smaller population, had nearly two hundred miles of paved streets.<sup>46</sup>

Two factors were at the root of the retarded street program. The Williams administration, having expended the bulk of its revenues for sewers and water mains, lacked the funds for street modernization. Further, many undoubtedly remembered the city's unhappy experience with street development in the 1860's.

At that time streets were surfaced with treated wooden blocks, and the expense entailed was an important factor in the city's bankruptcy of 1879. As a taxing district the city was unable to float bonds except by authorization of the State Legislature, and local residents were reluctant to provide funds by increasing their taxes when they could not be certain that their own property would benefit from new construction.

In an effort to overcome this difficulty of financing, the State Legislature passed in 1907 the front foot assessment law. The act applied specifically to Memphis and provided that owners of property abutting a street could petition the city to improve that street if they indicated their willingness to pay two-thirds of the cost. The remaining cost was to be borne by the city.<sup>47</sup> The act was immediately assailed in the courts, but its constitutionality was upheld in the State Supreme Court.<sup>48</sup>

Even while the law was being contested, it was extensively in use, for by July, 1908, the Legislative Council had passed forty-six front foot assessment ordinances requiring appropriations on the part of the city to the amount of \$750,000.<sup>49</sup> Yet the law proved to be cumbersome, since it was difficult to get sufficient agreement among property owners to initiate a paving program. That difficulty was overcome in 1908, when Mayor James H. Malone, who had succeeded Williams, sponsored an amendment to the assessment law which gave to the city, rather than the property holders, the privilege of initiating paving projects and of assessing property holders two-thirds of the paving costs.<sup>50</sup> In that year, when the amended law was adopted, the State Legislature authorized the city to issue \$1,000,000 in bonds for street improvement. This sum served as basis for assessments on property holders and enabled the city to make a real beginning on a program of improving and modernizing its street system.<sup>51</sup>

At the turn of the century cars and wagons traveling on dirt and gravel streets stirred up dust clouds during the dry summer

months. At times the condition became "intolerable," and the *Commercial Appeal* cited among its objections to the "dust devil" that it "inconvenienced" the lungs, badly damaged clothes, "obstructed the vision and choked those who had to inhale it."<sup>52</sup> Since prevailing opinion held that the dust was not only a nuisance, but very likely the bearer of disease, it came to be regarded primarily as a health problem and was turned over to the Board of Health for solution. Sprinkling the streets seemed to be the only answer, and in 1901, \$35,000 was expended for tramway cars and carts which enabled the Board of Health to sprinkle 105 miles daily as conditions warranted.<sup>53</sup> Sprinkling, however, was merely a palliative; only paving the streets could solve the problem.

The expansion of the city in 1899 made necessary the organization as well as the modernization of the streets. Memphis found it had three Overton streets, two Brinkley streets, a Brinkley Avenue, and two Eighth streets, and had to straighten out the confusion by an ordinance of the Legislative Council.<sup>54</sup> Some people who wanted to give Memphis a big city air suggested that Main Street should have a name that sounded less provincial.<sup>55</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* spiked that bit of pretension by stating, "We must confess we have had our doubts about the propriety of changing the name of Main Street. The idea that it is characteristic of small towns to have a name like this is not even respectable nonsense."<sup>56</sup> Yet some concessions had to be made to the changing times, and in December, 1908, the Legislative Council adopted an ordinance providing for a general overhauling of the street naming system. Streets running east and west were to be called avenues, while those running north and south were designated streets.<sup>57</sup> In the shuffle, Beale Street, "where the Blues began," became Beale Avenue, but its traditions were such that the people of Memphis continued to think and speak of it as Beale Street. Another casualty was historic DeSoto Street, notorious for its crime and violence.

After 1908 it was doomed to respectability by the prosaic title of Third Street.

Similarly, house numbering was so chaotic that only a complete renumbering system could restore order. In 1900 the Legislative Council met the challenge resolutely with an ordinance providing that houses should be renumbered, owners bearing assessments of 50 cents to defray costs. Possibly the people of Memphis sensed tyranny in the manner in which the renumbering was to be effected, or perhaps a sentimental attachment to their old numbers made them reluctant to accept the new designations, for several years elapsed before the new system was completed. The *Commercial Appeal*, observing the delay, gloomily gave its view of the matter: "As we expected, the project of numbering the city has fallen through. We gave the city engineer's office until the middle of the twentieth century to renumber Memphis, and we see no reason why we should change the forecast."<sup>58</sup> The city, stung to action, legislated a fine of from \$2 to \$50 for houses remaining unnumbered.<sup>59</sup> Yet four years later post office officials were pleading for an "adequate and sensible" numbering of the houses of the city and recommending that the plan of 1900 be fully carried out.<sup>60</sup> Finally, in January, 1905, Postmaster L. W. Dutro announced that after January 15, the mails would not be delivered to houses improperly numbered.<sup>61</sup> The edict had the desired effect; at least, there was no more agitation over the matter in the city's newspapers.

The delay in achieving a metropolitan street system was paralleled in the development of the Memphis fire department. In 1899 Fire Chief William F. Carroll surveyed the fire departments of eleven Northern and Southern cities of approximately the same size as Memphis, and found Memphis had less than one-fifth their average footage of fire hose, less than one-half their number of alarm boxes, one-half their number of hydrants, and half as much water pressure.<sup>62</sup>

During the next three years no substantial improvement was made, and fire insurance companies began to talk of raising their rates because of inadequate equipment and an incompetent fire department. Particularly, Chief Carroll was singled out for criticism, the companies charging that he was "too nearsighted to work properly," that he lost his head at fires, and that he was occasionally under the influence of liquor while on duty.<sup>63</sup> Carroll responded by requesting that the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners investigate his fitness to head the department. The action of the Commissioners was to vindicate him, and Mayor Williams added his endorsement by stating publicly that Carroll was "one of the best chiefs we ever had."<sup>64</sup>

The insurance companies were not reassured and they invoked a 25 per cent penalty rate increase. Outwardly city officials and business leaders made a great show of indignation over what they called an unwarranted discrimination against Memphis, and there were suggestions that enterprising local capitalists might do well to organize a Memphis insurance company. But local capitalists were chary about putting their money into such a venture—and for good reason. Yearly conflagrations, with some single losses running from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000, provided striking evidence why the insurance companies had raised their rates, and that the only real solution to the problem lay in improving the fire department.<sup>65</sup>

Realizing this, the city set about increasing the department's equipment. In July, 1902, three months after the insurance companies had raised their rates, a fire engine was purchased from the La France Engine Company. This brought the total number of engines in service to nine, although three more were needed to meet the minimum number required by insurance standards.<sup>66</sup> By the end of 1903, the department had added two more engines, bringing the total to eleven. These, with three hook and ladder trucks,<sup>67</sup> were enough to enable Chief Carroll to assert that "the mercantile district is better protected than

any other city. There is no city in the country where five or six steamer companies can be located in a shorter space of time.”<sup>68</sup>

In November, 1903, the department demonstrated its new equipment to the public. It was an exciting spectacle, particularly when “the big No. 9 engine” with a “thunderous roar” threw a one-and-three-quarter-inch stream of water “at least thirty feet higher than the Porter Building,” whereupon “a great cheer rose from the crowd.”<sup>69</sup> The demonstration apparently impressed more than the public, for one week later fire insurance rates returned to their previous level.<sup>70</sup>

The Williams administration’s primary concern with sewer-ing and water helps to explain the slow improvement of the fire department, as it does the lag in the street surfacing program. The fire department doubtless suffered also, in efficiency and morale, from too much politics; promotions were made with reference to the fireman’s faithfulness to the politics of the administration. That Carroll, in addition to his other shortcomings, was also a politician, more useful to the Williams administration in this capacity than as a fireman, was a charge that was made frequently. In March, 1905, the anti-Williams faction of the Legislative Council ousted Carroll and replaced him with John Donahue, who himself became shortly a victim of politics.<sup>71</sup> A rising faction in the Fire and Police Commissioners, headed by John T. Walsh, charged Donahue with being involved in politics—just how, they did not specify—and insisted on his removal despite the expressed desire of most of the insurance companies to have him continued as chief. The *Commercial Appeal* likewise thought it a “serious mistake” to release Donahue, saying that he was an “excellent fireman,” and that he kept politics out of the fire department.<sup>72</sup> But out he went, to be succeeded by Neely Sullivan, who managed to hold his position throughout the mayoralty of James H. Malone. The uncertain and intensely partisan nature of city politics that continued until 1910 made tenure precarious not only for chiefs

but for all grades of firemen. Such conditions did not help departmental morale, and although increased appropriations after 1903 helped to solve the problem of inadequate equipment, politics continued to undermine the department's efficiency.

In the two decades following the yellow fever epidemic Memphis was so consumed with a passion for business that little thought was given to those things that would add grace to its life and temper the rawness of its commercial spirit. It is to the credit of the political and civic leaders of Memphis at the turn of the century that their concern with the city's growth was not limited to such improvements as sewers and streets. Indeed, their greatest contribution to Memphis was its park system.

The original proprietors of Memphis had laid the first plans for a park system. A plan of the town prepared by William Lawrence provided that the waterfront should be adorned by four squares, to be called Auction, Market, Exchange, and Court. Connecting the four squares would be a promenade running along the bluff from Union Avenue on the south to Jackson Avenue on the north. But these wise provisions were gradually altered by the demands of commercial expediency. In 1847 the city leased Exchange Square for ninety-nine years, and in the seventies and eighties cessions of land were made from the promenade area to provide sites for the Custom House and Cossitt Library. Particularly objectionable was the leasing of land from the promenade and park areas for the use of railroads. In 1881, half of Auction Square was leased to a railroad company, and subsequently the whole length of the promenade area was taken over by the railroads for trackage.

Thus by 1898 the founders' comprehensive park plan, involving over forty acres of an integrated system, was reduced through leases and donations to about ten acres, with a consequent loss in the original harmony of design. Of the four original squares only two, Court and Market, remained intact.<sup>73</sup> Court Square, because of its larger area and central location,



became the nucleus and the most widely used of the city's park areas before the turn of the century. Here assemblages were treated to resounding political oratory, and when visiting celebrities came to town, the square was the scene of their introduction to the public.

Besides the fragments of the original park areas, the city possessed about twenty acres of additional park lands, secured around the turn of the century. Some were given by individuals, including Gaston Park, a five-acre tract donated by John Gaston, a successful immigrant hotel owner and restaurateur, and Bickford Park, the gift of W. W. Bickford. The city set aside the old Memphis City Hospital grounds as a park site for a statue of General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Some citizens had long been conscious of the deficiencies in the park system and occasionally had expressed themselves publicly on the subject. One of the most conscientious advocates of systematic park development was Judge L. B. McFarland. In 1869 in a letter to the *Appeal* he urged that the municipal government pay more attention to the development of parks and added that "no city will be greatly populous or truly great without proper provision for the pleasurable and the aesthetic."<sup>74</sup> McFarland condemned the blindness to civic planning shown by preceding municipal administrations by asserting that the bluffs fronting the river should never have been "desecrated by a shanty engine-house" or made the site of public buildings.<sup>75</sup> He was particularly concerned about the presence of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad station and shops in the center of the city, and said the railroad's holdings should be condemned or purchased and removed to South Memphis.

The city election of 1898 brought into office a number of strong advocates of a modern park system, the most prominent of whom were Mayor Williams, Councilmen Hu L. Brinkley, and H. H. Litty. In the fall of 1898, just before the meeting of the State Legislature, Williams prepared a bill authorizing

the city to issue bonds for the purchase and condemnation of lands for parks and parkways and the election of a Board of Park Commissioners.<sup>76</sup> The act was passed by the Legislature, March 27, 1899. In February, 1900, Williams proposed to the council that the city acquire additional park lands and establish a park commission and in July his recommendation was made law. On the same day that the ordinance was passed, Williams nominated Judge McFarland as chairman of the Park Commission and Robert Galloway and John R. Godwin to serve as the remaining members.<sup>77</sup> In October, the council voted to issue bonds to the amount of \$250,000 for use by the Park Commission in financing the project.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, preliminary plans had been laid for the extent and form of the proposed park system. In 1899 Memphis was visited by William Olmsted of Olmsted Brothers, Brookline, Massachusetts, designers of New York's Central Park. After touring the city and its environs by bicycle, Olmsted reported that Memphis had grown so much and had been so remiss about planning that it would be difficult to develop a satisfactory system of public squares and small neighborhood parks. His recommendation, essentially the basis of the future Memphis park system, was that the city should develop two large parks, one on the river south of the city, and the other at the eastern extremity. He further recommended a system of parkway connections between the two parks.<sup>79</sup>

Influenced by the recommendations of Olmsted, McFarland and his associates on the Park Commission went to Nashville to discuss with Overton Lea the acquisition of his east Memphis estate.<sup>80</sup> They seemed to have been successful in their mission, for in December, 1900, the council authorized the commission to purchase Lea's entire estate at \$300 per acre. Lea, however, objected to the disposal of all his property on the grounds that a park would so enhance the value of the land that competitive speculators in the potential park area would profit at his ex-

pense. He sought to retain 162 acres of his 337-acre tract so that he himself might enjoy greater profit from their later sale.<sup>81</sup> Lea's proposal was denied, but a compromise was reached by paying him \$327 per acre instead of the \$300 originally proposed.<sup>82</sup> In addition to the Lea tract, the council authorized the commission to purchase 340 acres in south Memphis on the Mississippi at \$200 per acre.<sup>83</sup> Added to this area was an adjoining seventy-acre tract, allocated by the Shelby County Court.<sup>84</sup>

By the acquisition of these two large tracts, the Park Commission had laid the foundations of the city's now magnificent park system. The next step was to name them. There was little question about a name for the 410-acre tract south of the city. Its location on the Mississippi foreordained that it be called "Riverside Park," but the naming of the Lea tract was more of a problem. Such names as "The Oakes," "McKinley," "Schley National," and the inevitable "Robert E. Lee," were discarded in favor of "Overton Park," in honor of Judge John Overton, one of the founders of Memphis.<sup>85</sup>

The two tracts were not only large but were naturally beautiful. When describing Overton Park in his *History of Memphis*, Judge Young's prose became rhapsodic:

Rare wild plants, vines, grasses and flowers spring up in bewildering luxuriance and infinite variety to attract the scientist and lover of nature and where children can roam next to Mother Earth and her own immediate handiwork, as in the days of our first parents. . . . Trees that were here when DeSoto came rear their mighty heads at intervals, and one buried in the great wilderness can discern no evidence that despoiling civilization exists anywhere near.<sup>86</sup>

Riverside Park had even more to recommend it as a beauty spot. As heavily wooded as Overton Park, it extended along a sixty-foot bluff overlooking the Mississippi. When Judge Young attempted to describe the beauty of Riverside Park his prose failed, and tribute was rendered in nine stanzas of verse.<sup>87</sup>

The parkway system connecting Riverside and Overton parks was made possible principally by valuable gifts of land from public spirited citizens, notably W. A. Collier, G. A. Palm, and Chancellor F. H. Heiskell.<sup>88</sup>

Improving both parkways and parks was a slow process because of the relatively small amount of money available to the Park Commission from the city's annual budget. In his annual report to the Legislative Council in 1909, Robert Galloway, who had succeeded McFarland as chairman of the Park Commission, estimated the total value of the park system to be over \$4,000,000. He further estimated that \$1,000,000 was needed to complete its development. But he thought it was not "fair to the present taxpayer to pay the whole cost of the parks and turn the valuable assets over to posterity."<sup>89</sup> He advocated a bond issue of the required amount that would enable a decrease in the special park tax from 20 cents on a hundred dollar assessment to 15 cents. Galloway thought that in fifty years, when the bonds matured, the parks would be worth \$40,000,000.

In line with his recommendations, the State Legislature authorized the million dollar park bond issue, and the Legislative Council passed the ordinance to sell the bonds.<sup>90</sup> This action in effect meant the completion of the plan for parks and parkways which Olmsted had set forth some ten years earlier. The high value of parks for the enrichment of modern urban culture is well recognized, and one of the just claims of Memphis to pre-eminence over neighboring Southern cities was its possession of 782 acres of city-owned park land. With the exception of Louisville, this surpassed every other Southern city.<sup>91</sup>

To build a park system without a zoo would have been a gross injustice to the city's younger generation, and in April, 1906, Commissioner Galloway advised the Park Commission that if it would appropriate \$1,200 to start one he would raise a fund to maintain it.<sup>92</sup> The drive for funds was begun with a baseball game held at Montgomery Park between the members

of the Cotton Exchange and members of the Merchants Exchange. The *Commercial Appeal* announced that one of the features of the game was to be a balloon anchored above the park, the occupant of which "will carry with him a gigantic megaphone . . . and will call the game off by innings to the people of Mississippi and Arkansas."<sup>93</sup> In the meantime donations of animals were being received, and the zoo was begun at Overton Park with two white rats and a coyote. The acquisition in 1910 of an elephant named "Sara" made the zoo real, at least so far as Memphis children were concerned.<sup>94</sup>

Band concerts were another popular attraction of Overton Park in the years preceding the first World War. The band of local musicians was conducted by "Professor" William Saxby and played Sunday afternoon and evening concerts. Particularly in the fall, when an occasional cool Sunday gave relief from the September heat, thousands would crowd the street cars bound for Overton Park to hear Saxby's band play Arthur Pryor's "On Jersey Shore" and familiar overtures.<sup>95</sup>

The concern shown by public officials for parks was, in a broad sense, an expression of an impulse for social betterment and a part of the pattern of progressivism. For the most part, the Negro was never made an object of concern by any large number of progressives and this was especially true in the South, where the Negro's caste status excluded him from sharing in many of the benefits of the age.

In Memphis the opportunity for recreation and relaxation afforded by parks was confined, of course, to that part of the population that was white, and this condition set into sharper relief the need for a park for Negroes. In April, 1910, the *Commercial Appeal* stated that "the decent negroes of Memphis want a park. By a common consent they have withdrawn from the public parks now used by the white people. . . . We believe it would be a good thing for Memphis and a good thing for the negroes."<sup>96</sup>

In February, 1911, Park Commission chairman Galloway, feeling that some gesture had to be made, suggested that President's Island in the Mississippi would be a good site for a Negro park. There, he said, "the negro park question is forever solved."<sup>97</sup> To be sure, the island was inundated sometimes, he said, "but the overflow usually comes at a season of the year when people do not care much about going to parks. When the water subsides there is a rich alluvial deposit left, which accounts for the rich luxuriant growth that covers the island. The Negro ought to be in his glory among all that tropical growth."<sup>98</sup>

Apparently Galloway's proposition was not taken seriously because several months later some of the members of the Park Commission, supported by Mayor E. H. Crump, proposed that the city purchase fifty acres of land on Macon Road several miles beyond the city's eastern limit. The proposition was made without the concurrence of Galloway, who at the time was cruising in the Caribbean on his yacht. Hastening back to Memphis he "immediately donned his war clothes and . . . sent a letter to Mayor Crump notifying him that he . . . was ready at any time to appear before the board of city commissioners in opposition to the plan."<sup>99</sup> Galloway did not want to be "misunderstood" on the issue by seeming to oppose the idea of a park for Negroes, but, as he explained it, "I am decidedly not in favor of buying any property for a negro park just at this time. . . . If we can manage to get any spare money more than is needed for the maintenance of the parks on the present scale, there are a thousand things I could mention that the people have a right to expect us to do." Emphasizing Galloway's opposition to the purchase of a park for Negroes, organized labor called a mass meeting to oppose the proposed site.<sup>100</sup> In April, the city commissioners gave way to Galloway's objections and voted against its purchase.<sup>101</sup>

Yet sentiment for a Negro park continued, and in April, 1913, the Commission announced a plan to purchase a fifty-acre tract, again at the eastern limits of the city in the National Cemetery area. This time the violent objection of white residents in the district forestalled favorable action.<sup>102</sup> But the Commission did not let the matter rest. It returned to a consideration of the Macon Road site and on April 24 voted to purchase it and to call it Douglass Park. So that the patrons of the Raleigh Road streetcar not be discommoded, Negroes were warned that if they used this line for transportation the park would be closed. One of the commissioners pointed out that they could just as well use the Louisville and Nashville Railroad which ran close to the park.<sup>103</sup>

Douglass Park was a postscript to the expansion and improvement of the city that began with the "Greater Memphis" movement and developed under the city leadership of Mayor Williams. Williams' contemporaries credited him especially with the city's sewer system, which one political opponent called a monument to him that "will stand forever, even though it be underground."<sup>104</sup> He also deserves credit for the part he played in building better streets in Memphis and in starting the city's magnificent park system.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### *Sodom and Gomorrah*

IN THE YEAR 1907, so the story goes, a young man living in Chattanooga received a letter from an uncle who had recently removed to Memphis to practice his profession as a bartender. Such was the wickedness of the city, wrote the uncle, that had it existed alongside Sodom and Gomorrah, God would have had to destroy Memphis first.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary opinion was well-nigh universal that Memphis was a lawless city. A resident of St. Louis, returning home after a visit to Memphis, sought, in a letter to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, to warn his fellow citizens against the pitfalls a traveler might encounter in the Bluff City. He concluded that the “only difference between Memphis and hell is that Memphis has a river running alongside of it,” while hell’s river ran through it.<sup>2</sup> In 1905 an old Negro woman, standing on Main Street near Madison, attracted a crowd of listeners by warning that Memphis was going to be sunk in a bottomless pit on account of its wickedness.<sup>3</sup> And today, when old-timers are questioned about the roaring two decades after the turn of the century, they agree that Memphis was a bad city indeed and many recount with pride their personal roles in establishing its reputation for sin.



Quite naturally it was the clergy that showed the greatest concern. The shepherds of Baptist and Methodist flocks, especially, felt keenly the notable successes of the devil and cried out against them. Most of them blamed drink. A Methodist district conference in Memphis reported that the "number of out-and-out saloons and wholesale whiskey houses supported by the people of Memphis would shock and surprise you, besides the family grocers and soda fountains with saloon attachments."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, whisky was sold in such quantities that on the sidewalks of Front Street bottles were piled in bushel baskets and sold on the spot.<sup>5</sup> The Reverend Thomas S. Potts, pastor of the Central Baptist Church, told his Sunday evening congregation that "this is a wide-open city. . . . Every saloon in Memphis is open tonight; everyone who came to church came by an open saloon—open contrary to law—there is not even an effort to enforce the law against them."<sup>6</sup> The Reverend A. U. Boone of the First Baptist Church concluded that "It is the few who will have to fight the Lord's battle in Memphis."<sup>7</sup> The pastor of the First Methodist Church, the Reverend W. R. Newell, thought there was so much sin in Memphis that the end of the world was surely near.<sup>8</sup>

If they were right in detecting the devil most often in the guise of the saloon, they had reason enough to sound the alarm. In 1903 Memphis had 504 saloons, more than most cities of comparable size in the United States.<sup>9</sup> This figure would have little significance had the Memphis saloon been the genteel institution of the European type, where patrons imbibed as a stimulus to pleasant conversation. But in Memphis a majority of the saloons were anything but genteel, and many of them were nothing more than dives. Many were places where men called "steerers" took countrymen to rob them; many had a room, in the rear or upstairs, equipped with slot-machines and dice tables; a number had dance halls and "variety theatres" where prostitutes solicited, and some provided the setting for

violence and murder. These saloons were the focal point of lawlessness; they provided for the disturbed and transient people of the urban proletariat a setting for a frenetic excitement and a boisterous camaraderie that easily degenerated into violence.<sup>10</sup>

The saloons were enmeshed in politics. When reformers attempted to curb some of their more open violations of the laws, especially the one regulating Sunday closing, they found themselves impotent. The political balance of power rested with the keepers of dives who acted as political mentors for their patrons. The price they exacted for this service was the protection of their interests, and despite the continuing cries of the righteous for reform, no political organization with expectations of remaining in power dared affront them. In 1906, when Councilman E. H. Crump proposed an increase in the annual tax on saloons from \$60 to \$250, Vice-Mayor John T. Walsh quickly marshalled forces to prevent its passage.<sup>11</sup>

Not all Memphis saloons, however, were of such a low order. Some were simply neighborhood grocery stores that catered to the usually innocuous habits of a bibulous clientele. Some of the downtown saloons were solidly respectable. In 1909, when it appeared that the state-wide prohibition law might be enforced in the city, the *Commercial Appeal* devoted an editorial to the "Strange Condition" about to dawn and lamented the prospect of passing landmarks. There was the place belonging to "Uncle Tom O'Sullivan, who never violated a civil state or city law in his life."<sup>12</sup> The same could be said of Joe Mancini's bar on Madison Street, the little bar in Gaston's Hotel, and Charlie Seat's saloon, which "could never be equalled in the South for its magnificent fixtures" and which could surely be called a high class place.

Prostitution added to Memphis' reputation for wickedness. It is, of course, impossible to know its extent, but those who remember Memphis during the years before the first World War agree that it was widespread. An editorial in the *Commer-*

*cial Appeal*, May 7, 1907, said, "Dives have been flourishing as they have never flourished before. Hundreds of lewd women, equipped with vials of chloral and knock-out drops, have been imported. Street-walkers have been as thick as wasps in summer time." Brothels were located throughout the "Tenderloin" on Main Street south of Linden and were scattered along Third, Fourth, and Mulberry Streets. They were concentrated in Gayoso Street, center of the red-light district. Here were found the more solidly established institutions that catered to a more discriminating clientele. At 121 Gayoso Street was the famous "Stanley Club," where the affront of the commercial spirit was eased by expensive furnishings and a proper regard for the amenities. Mrs. Grace Stanley, the Negro proprietress, was one of the most notorious women in Memphis, and it was commonly held that she was the possessor of great wealth. She succumbed to an occupational hazard when she was stabbed to death by an aggrieved employee named Loretta Lee.<sup>13</sup> Gayoso Street had other colorful personalities. "Sapho," one of Anita Blanco's girls, achieved widespread reputation for her ability to relieve her gentlemen callers of large sums of money.<sup>14</sup> Eva Furgeson, born in the West Indies as the daughter of a physician, enjoyed a varied life as an actress and a medical freak before despair drove her to Gayoso Street. Her specialty was to run a hatpin through her cheeks and tongue without showing any signs of pain. She was described as a "strikingly handsome" woman with a "perfectly moulded" figure.<sup>15</sup> In 1905 she was murdered in a saloon by a jealous ex-paramour.

Drug addiction was also prevalent during this period. The *Commercial Appeal* thought that "few people can appreciate the extensive use of cocaine in Memphis," and estimated that 80 per cent of the Negro population and "a considerable number of whites" used cocaine to the extent that about a dozen drug stores and several corner groceries depended upon it as their chief item of support.<sup>16</sup> It was sold in five- and ten-cent

boxes, a five-cent box furnishing "a comfortable drunk for four or five hours." Some Negroes held "coke" parties. Invited participants formed a circle in a room, sang a lullaby in the form of a weird chant, and then took boxes of powdered cocaine from their pockets, and passed them around to be inhaled in a communal ceremony. After the drug had had its effect, each one of the users "according to his or her mood," performed "some special antic for the benefit of the crowd."<sup>17</sup> Drug addiction was so widespread that law enforcement agencies were unable to curb it. In 1900 the police department advised Mayor Williams that "the sale of cocaine has reached such an alarming extent that the department is unable to cope with its ravages."<sup>18</sup> Williams acted by sponsoring an ordinance that cocaine be sold only by a physician's prescription. But apparently the law did little good, for in 1905 the *Commercial Appeal* again complained that drug addiction "seems to be growing" and spoke of the use of opium as well as cocaine.<sup>19</sup>

A more spectacular symptom of the disorganized life of a large stratum of the city's population was the high rate of violence and murder. In Memphis killing was not accomplished in a sophisticated manner by a slow working poison or a secretly managed throttling with a silk stocking. Memphis murders were nakedly brutal, in the manner of the tragic affair of the Wooten brothers, Jesse and William. Some unimportant unpleasantness that had occurred between them in the past was revived when they happened to meet in front of the J. H. Coffin Company warehouse on Auction Street. The argument terminated when both men fired at each other, over the head of Jesse's little son, until William, dying, went down with five bullets in his body.<sup>20</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal* in an editorial on the frequency of murder considered it "the most thriving industry" in Memphis and exclaimed: "They kill them next door to the city hall and shoot them in the parks." The writer told of hearing a news-

boy cry, "All about the big murder!" The newsboy, he said, was not in the least original, since "Every day is murder day. Some day if he should go there and cry out, 'Not a man killed in twenty-four hours in Memphis territory,' he might do a bigger business."<sup>21</sup>

If the murder rate can be taken as an indication of the extensiveness of crime in general, then it is clear that Memphis was easily the most crime-ridden city in the United States. In 1902 Memphis had twenty-four arrests for homicides, whereas Fall River, Massachusetts, a city of comparable size, had only three. Atlanta, a city almost as populous as the Bluff City and with nearly as high a percentage of Negroes, had only six arrests for murder.<sup>22</sup> In 1906 the Shelby County Criminal Court tried forty-three cases for murder in the first degree,<sup>23</sup> and in 1910 the court had 105 homicide indictments pending on its calendar.<sup>24</sup> Almost fantastic heights were reached in the murder rate in 1915 and 1916, with 125 and 134 homicides, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

This high murder rate inevitably attracted more than local comment. Around 1918, Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, consulting statistician of the Prudential Insurance Company of America, published a series of pamphlets on comparative murder rates in the major cities of the United States. He called Memphis the "murder town" of the country, and reported that the "highest homicide rate during the decade ending with 1910 prevailed in Memphis where it was 47.1 per hundred thousand of population."<sup>26</sup> In 1916, Memphis led the 31 large American cities Hoffman surveyed with 89.9 homicides per hundred thousand population, more than twice as many as its nearest competitor, Atlanta, with 31.<sup>27</sup>

Hoffman's charges naturally provoked an answer from city authorities. They excused Memphis on the grounds that most of the murders were committed among Negroes, for whom neither the police nor city officials could be held responsible.<sup>28</sup> The Negro, however, cannot be given absolute blame for the

high murder rate. While Memphis had a high proportion of Negroes in its total population, other southern cities with an even higher proportion of Negroes had much lower murder rates.<sup>29</sup> The Negro, because of the miserable nature of his existence, was thrust more helplessly into the complex of forces making for crime. Another excuse given was that Memphis was the "Good Samaritan of the Mississippi," that victims of shootings or knifings in other places came to Memphis hospitals or boarding houses for care or concealment and frequently died there to be counted in the city's record for homicides.<sup>30</sup>

There were more basic explanations for the city's high murder rate. Memphis, with its reputation as a resort town, attracted unstable people, both white and Negro. Its location along the main lines of transportation made it a stopover place for vagrants, and its nearness to the borders of three states made it handy for the criminal who desired to place a state line between himself and would-be apprehenders. As close as one can come to explaining murder in Memphis without naming the devil himself is to refer again to some of the characteristic features of the city's populace. Drawn from rural areas where life in too many instances was made miserable by poverty and ill health, its members, both white and Negro, found only more misery in the city. Uprooted from their rural way of life and unsettled in their urban one, many could not resist the blandishments of the saloon, which usually served as a breeding place for crime.

For some the problem of adjusting themselves seemed to admit of no solution, and suicide became the final resort. The suicide rate, which in 1902 had been 6.4 per hundred thousand population,<sup>31</sup> had risen by 1910 to 22.8 per hundred thousand—over 4 per hundred thousand in excess of the national average for cities.<sup>32</sup> Most of the suicides were attributed to alcoholism, despondency, or ill health, and by far the greater number of them took place in the rooming house area.<sup>33</sup>

The disposition to lawlessness of the more unsettled segment of the population was utilized by unscrupulous promoters as a means of profit. Prostitution and gambling, particularly, were susceptible to organization, and the overlords of these operations were rumored to have amassed considerable fortunes. Moreover, because the people of Memphis were conditioned to an acceptance of lawlessness, the masters of the underworld enjoyed a curious position of respect in the community.

During the nineties the czars of crime had been Jim Kinnane and Ed Ryan. The feud waged by them and their lieutenants for control of the city's prostitution and gambling franchises made the decade a turbulent one in the annals of Memphis crime.<sup>34</sup> By the turn of the century their power began to pass to others. Ryan's career was terminated by Mike Shanley in a shooting fray at the Montgomery Park race track and Kinnane's supremacy was challenged by several of his rising lieutenants.

Probably the most notorious of the underworld overlords at the turn of the century and in the decade following was John Persica. Coming to Memphis in the early 1880's, he gradually built up his resort on Hernando Street until it gained a wide reputation for the variety of sins in which patrons could indulge themselves. It was estimated that "Some 20 penal statutes were violated day and night in Persica's place, but still he ran it openly with each change in government of the city."<sup>35</sup> As one oldtimer put it, "anything went in 'Persky's' place from murder on up."<sup>36</sup> Like all self-respecting criminals, Persica had his own "code of ethics," the principal article of which held that while prostitutes might solicit on his premises, they were required to take their clients elsewhere when an understanding had been reached. He strictly forbade fighting in his place; if force was necessary, it was Persica who applied it.<sup>37</sup>

Persica developed other interests. He became a promoter of boxing matches. With the consolidation of the electric street car lines in 1893, he secured a lease on the old car barn and made

it into the Garden Theatre, a place habituated by the "most dissolute of men and women."<sup>38</sup> In addition, Persica held the franchise for all the gambling privileges south of Madison Street and around the Union Depot.

Memphis had other entrepreneurs in crime. Rivaling Persica was George Honan, "one of the most desperate men that ever lived in Memphis."<sup>39</sup> After the turn of the century Honan emerged as the controlling agent of the gambling interests north of Madison Street.<sup>40</sup> Persica's two lieutenants, Mike Haggerty and Bud Deggs, possessed a large vested interest in lawlessness as well as a record of outstanding personal accomplishment in it.<sup>41</sup> They also played an important role in politics, their headquarters in the well-known Turf Saloon on the corner of Gayoso and Second Streets being the Fourth Ward's nerve center.<sup>42</sup>

In the years just before the first World War "bad" men were distinguished not so much for master-minding the underworld as for their personal escapades. Prominent among them was Mike Shanley, whose career began with the killing of Ed Ryan. Soon afterwards, Shanley opened a saloon that became the scene of a series of sensational brawls. On one occasion, when twenty-eight Negroes had been arrested in Shanley's place and taken to Justice of Peace William Creagan's office, Shanley followed them there, drew a "small-sized cannon" from his pocket and, leveling it at the judge's head, threatened to send him to hell. When this insult to judicial dignity was brought before the court, Justice Creagan discreetly agreed with the interpretation offered by Shanley's lawyer. His ingenious explanation was that Shanley was reaching into his pocket for tobacco and mistakenly took out a pistol which he was taking to a repair shop for a friend.<sup>43</sup>

On another occasion, Shanley went to Montgomery Park to witness a balloon ascension. On being ordered to extinguish his cigar, he wrathfully returned to his place of business, recruited several of his Irish compatriots, and returned to the park where



they brought down the ascending balloon with a fusillade of shotgun pellets.<sup>44</sup> Shanley was never convicted for any of his deeds of daring.

Another grossly distorted personality was Will Latura, frequently referred to in the papers as "Wild Bill." Latura possessed a "long record" of Negro killing.<sup>45</sup> In 1908, for no obvious reason, he entered a Negro saloon and after loudly proclaiming that he was going to turn the place into a funeral parlor he shot and killed six customers. Latura was acquitted of this crime, but not without a protest from the *Commercial Appeal*. The killing of Negroes without cause, said the paper, was "being overdone" and ought to be stopped "because it was wrong in itself" and because "those white men who kill negroes as a pastime . . . usually end up by killing white men."<sup>46</sup> In 1912 Latura added "Another Negro to his Long List" but was not tried.<sup>47</sup>

Most of Memphis' bad men died as violently as they had lived. John Persica died in an automobile accident in 1913 while speeding on Madison Avenue, and George Honan was killed in a pistol duel after fatally shooting a girl.<sup>48</sup> Mike Haggerty was killed in his own establishment when a Negro, "full of bad liquor," struck one of his waiters. Haggerty drew his pistol and fired as the Negro fired at him. Both were killed, Haggerty living "barely long enough to be told that his bullet had gone through his slayer's heart."<sup>49</sup> Mike Shanley was killed in 1908 by a city detective while "resisting arrest."<sup>50</sup> At the time of his death his body, emaciated from tuberculosis, weighed only ninety pounds, and the policeman's bullet only hastened his impending death. Shanley had been a good family man, said the *Commercial Appeal*.

Latura's objection to being called "Wild Bill" in the newspapers led to his death. On one occasion he telephoned C. P. J. Mooney, the editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, and threatened to kill his whole editorial staff if he was ever again referred to

as "Wild Bill."<sup>51</sup> Editor Mooney gave orders that the practice should cease, but a number of years later, in 1915, a young reporter referred to "Wild Bill" as one of the city's principal attractions for tourists. The following night a group of policemen on patrol came face-to-face with Latura in the vicinity of his establishment. In one of his wild rages, he told the patrolmen he was going to "get" them. "And as for that smart aleck reporter, who called me 'Wild Bill,' " he continued, "I'm going to fix him so he'll never write up anybody else." Latura turned to walk away, and as he did, one of the patrolmen fired five shots into him. As he lay dying on the street, his small daughter ran to him from among the crowd and embraced him as "great sobs tore from his body."

The garish criminal exploits of the underworld naturally excited concern, and the law-abiding people of Memphis looked to a proper administration of the law to check them. Murder, especially, they felt, was treated with almost indifference. The *Commercial Appeal* observed that "Murders and notorious criminals, who should long ago have received their just measure of punishment, walk our streets."<sup>52</sup> On another occasion the paper complained that "What with the delays of the law, good lawyers for the defense, inefficient criminal methods in the courts, barbarous laws for the selection of juries, the murderer is in less danger of hanging than is the average pedestrian in danger of being hit by a stray bullet."<sup>53</sup> Its conclusion was that "Our killers have estimated the cost and have figured the danger of hanging into a negligible quantity."

It was indeed a rare occasion when a murderer was justly dealt with. Many cases were never brought to trial, and trials usually resulted in an acquittal, particularly if the case presented an opportunity to invoke the "unwritten law." In 1902 the *Commercial Appeal* saw the Criminal Court as the weakest part of the law enforcement system. The Court was without "force and . . . dignity. Its decline has been such that its rulings are

lightly regarded by lawyers, its assurance of enforcing the law not consoling to the law-abiding and lovers of order, and, as a menace to evil-doers, it has no terror, but is . . . regarded with contempt.”<sup>54</sup> The lawyers who practiced there, said the paper, slouched around “coatless, or tobacco squirting. . . . Outside the rail a crowd of loafers sit from morning until night doing nothing.”

With the election of John T. Moss as judge of the Criminal Court in 1902, judicial proceedings became more dignified, and the *Commercial Appeal* shifted its fire to abuses by other judges of the bail system.<sup>55</sup> Criminals under the jurisdiction of the Criminal Court could apply to the Probate Court for a writ of habeas corpus and secure bond, if it could be argued that they had been deprived of constitutional rights by the Criminal Court. In an exasperated editorial in September, 1906, the *Commercial Appeal* listed six killings that had occurred in public places within the month and asked how long the people of Memphis would put up with “having men charged with murder turned loose on bail by judges that have nothing to do with the cases.”<sup>56</sup> Judge Jacob S. Galloway of the Probate Court, continued the editorial, was not at all concerned about how many killings took place in Memphis so long as he could “keep the sacred writ of habeas corpus unsullied and unweakened.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, said the paper, Galloway was a “judicial cynic. He looks upon demand for reform or a protest against conditions . . . as a puritanical . . . cry for the unattainable.” In a statement to the *Commercial Appeal* Galloway defended himself by saying that the writ of habeas corpus had not been suspended in Shelby County and that “any person, be he of high or low degree, that has been oppressed, either by the arbitrary and illegal orders of a tyrannical judge or unlawfully restrained by an illegal warrant issued by a migratory magistrate, may apply for the writ and have his rights determined under the evidence and the law of the land.”<sup>58</sup> In view of the well-known disre-

gard for constitutional rights that characterized the actions of the "migratory" magistrates referred to by Galloway, it is reasonable to surmise that there was more justification for his policy than the *Commercial Appeal* allowed.<sup>59</sup>

With the retirement of Judge Moss in 1910 the Criminal Court seemed to have again lapsed into the carelessness that had characterized its proceedings in the few years immediately after the turn of the century. In 1911 the *Commercial Appeal* charged that since the courts "never collected bond forfeitures," criminals left the city to avoid trial.<sup>60</sup> The demoralized condition of the Criminal Court was further illustrated by the fact that Judge Jesse Edgington, the successor to Judge Moss, was impeached and convicted for the misconduct of his office, and his colleague, James Palmer, judge of the second division of the Criminal Court, resigned in order to avoid impeachment.<sup>61</sup>

The lamentable state of the Memphis courts existed primarily because of public acquiescence. Judge Lunceford P. Cooper of the Criminal Court, making a charge to the grand jury, pointed out that there could be no effective law enforcement "when a strong public sentiment behind the law is wanting."<sup>62</sup> He recognized that "while a great many clamor constantly against the daily evils, few are willing to discharge their duties as good citizens by going before the grand jury and preferring charges against wrong doers." Cooper found particularly hindering "the sentiment abroad that held that it was dishonorable to volunteer information to the grand jury." Finally, he recognized that in some instances vested interests had a stake in crime and used their influence to obstruct reform. He recalled that when an attempt was made to close houses of prostitution, the owners used their influence on behalf of their tenants.

Cooper's strictures on a public apathetic to crime did not apply where Negro criminals were concerned. As the *Commercial Appeal* observed: "We don't enforce the law against homicide in Tennessee, except in the case of negroes."<sup>63</sup> In 1909 the

paper reported that not a white man had been hanged in Shelby County since 1890, but added: "Since then we have had a hanging of negroes pretty much regularly every year."<sup>64</sup>

The police department was as ineffectual as the Criminal Court in suppressing crime. It, too, was criticized by the press, although not with the intensity of the attacks on the courts, since it was rather generally accepted that the police department was in politics and had to be inefficient. But the patience with which the *Commercial Appeal* tempered its criticism sometimes reached the breaking point. On one occasion, the paper charged "the local police force is absolutely inefficient and miserably incompetent," and on another, when commenting on the scarcity of policemen, it made the tart observation that "children of the suburbs . . . will run three blocks to see a real live policeman."<sup>65</sup>

The police department worked under real handicaps. It was understaffed; its members were overworked and underpaid. In 1902 the city had ninety-one policemen, while Atlanta, with a smaller population, had 158.<sup>66</sup> In view of the magnitude of the problem of law enforcement, the city might well have justified the use of at least fifty more men on its force. Patrolmen were on duty about fifteen hours a day, seven days a week.<sup>67</sup> The number of arrests made indicates that they did not spend their working hours in idle dalliance. In 1902 Memphis police made over five thousand arrests, a number that compared favorably with the records in other cities with police forces having upwards of fifty more men than the Memphis force.<sup>68</sup> For their labors patrolmen received \$75 to \$85 per month salary.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, politics threatened the tenure of police officials and contributed to inefficiency and demoralization in the department. The first Williams administration from 1898 to 1904 was characterized by a relative stability that was largely responsible for a stable tenure for department personnel. As a result, Williams' chief of police, Jerome E. Richards, was able to perform

the duties of his office without being burdened by political attack. With Richards' resignation in 1902 to run for political office, the department was put under J. J. Mason, an experienced policeman who had previously served as a captain on the force.<sup>70</sup> In 1904, with the rise of a political opposition pushing the reform issue, Mason came in for a considerable amount of criticism. In August of that year, he was placed on trial before the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners to determine his fitness for office. The result was to exonerate him, only one commissioner, John T. Walsh, voting to have him dismissed.<sup>71</sup> Seven months later the growing power of the anti-administration group forced Mason's resignation. He was replaced by George T. O'Haver, an outstanding detective who had just celebrated his twenty-fifth year of service on the Memphis force.<sup>72</sup> O'Haver served faithfully during a particularly turbulent period in Memphis politics, resigning in 1909 to establish a private detective agency.<sup>73</sup> He was succeeded by W. C. Davis, a member of the force since 1870 who had already served as chief for a fifteen-year period during the eighties and nineties.

It was not only the chiefs who felt the plague of politics. In 1906 the *Commercial Appeal* charged that all policemen were "hired or fired according to their usefulness as politicians," a circumstance that the paper attributed to the influence of the Walsh brothers, John T. and Anthony.<sup>74</sup> The "Walsh Philosophy," the paper charged, had turned the police force into a "platoon of ward heelers."<sup>75</sup>

Thus the police department, under-staffed, underpaid, and victimized by politics, could not provide a strong bulwark against crime. The succession of chiefs that directed the department during the first decade of the twentieth century seems without exception to have been incorruptible so far as any personal involvement was concerned. Doubtless many of the men in the ranks worked with a sense of public duty. The crime they fought was too complex and too deeply rooted in the nature of

the city's life to be effectively controlled by them. The police force itself became a part of a system of which crime was a part. It could hardly be blamed for not putting an end to gambling when gamblers paid regular assessments into the city treasury to help the city meet its expenses. As Chief Richards testified, the police department was told to be lenient with gamblers.<sup>76</sup>

As a result, law enforcement foundered, while the *Commercial Appeal*, after years of editorializing on the weakness of the courts and the police department, finally admitted that the problem was more complex than it had thought. In 1914 it asked in an editorial, "What Will Be the End of It All?" and suggested that a vigilance committee might be necessary to enforce the law. "Steal a shote or the price of a half a barrel of flour . . . and into the mines you go. Steal a million, kill three or four people . . . and maybe you will not be tried at all, and maybe if you are tried you can dictate your own penalty."<sup>77</sup>

But even if the *Commercial Appeal's* highest hopes for just and efficient law enforcement had been realized, the effect on crime could not have been more than palliative. The problem was not crime, but the disorganized personalities that made it. The solution to this problem had, for the progressives who were aware of it, but one approach. They felt the disorganization of society was a cause of the disorganization of individual lives, and that the way to bring harmony into those lives was first to bring it to society. Environmentalism was an important part of progressive theory. The individual was to be "saved" in terms of his society and society was to be made capable of saving through a harmonization and humanization of social institutions. This was the opposite approach from that of the reformers in the time before the modern period of history. For them the term "progress" had little meaning in the social and secular sense, but meant the perfecting of individual lives in preparation for entrance into the heavenly city. They believed the good society would be achieved only when men's values accorded

with and expressed their hope for Christian salvation. While the medieval reformers may have lacked the social vision of the progressives, they nevertheless held on to a transcendent principle which the progressives had lost.

For the social reformers of the progressive era in Memphis, who looked beyond law enforcement to solve the problem of crime, social reform came first. Improve the social order according to the formulas of the progressive movement, they believed, and individuals would lead better lives.



## CHAPTER SIX

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### *Ventures in Social Reform*

“EVERY SUNDAY MORNING,” complained the *Commercial Appeal*, “kids smoking cigarettes, gather in the parks, and shoot craps for hours in the pavilions and on the granolith sidewalks.”<sup>1</sup> Juvenile delinquency was one of a number of social problems that loomed large in Memphis with the advent of industrial age urbanization. Its causes, then as now, were many and complex, but among the more deeply disturbing ones were the secularization and shifting of values, seeming to affect life with a restlessness that could be appeased only by action and thrill.

Progressives preferred to deal with social problems empirically and were not apt to inquire into the nature of the age’s value system for a definition of the conditions they sought to better. It suited progressive temper to ameliorate delinquency by an attack on the morbid environmental conditions out of which it arose. It was obvious to all, for example, that children reared in thickly populated tenement districts, where invariably there could be found dives and not infrequently houses of prostitution, stood small chance of developing wholesome personalities.

One approach toward bettering the lot of children was to provide them with constructive recreational facilities. Stimulus to this approach was given in March, 1903, when Lee F. Hamner, field secretary of the National Playground Association, visited the city to promote the cause of playgrounds in Memphis.<sup>2</sup> Hamner's visit was followed by a series of lectures on the subject by Judge William Brown, Father John Daly, and Jacob Riis, all of whom worked nationally in the cause of the playground movement.<sup>3</sup> In 1908 Mrs. Thomas Scruggs, the wife of a prominent Memphis attorney, organized the Memphis Playground Association, with E. H. Crump, Miss Marion Griffin, and Dr. Frank Graham numbered among the incorporators.<sup>4</sup> Through this organization money was raised to provide public parks with playground equipment, and in June, 1908, the city's first children's playground was established at Overton Park. The following year equipment was installed at Brinkley and Gaston parks. Brinkley Park became the principal playground center with a park police force made up of the larger boys and with volunteer instructors on hand to teach sewing to the young girls.<sup>5</sup>

The problem of finding wholesome recreational opportunities for boys of a more mature age was partially solved by the work of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Y.M.C.A., which functioned in Memphis for the first time in 1883, was by 1903 offering a variety of activities for boys, including night classes for those who worked during the day. Four years later membership and activities had so expanded that it was thought necessary to provide the organization with a large modern building. A \$200,000 fund raising drive was started under the chairmanship of John R. Pepper, a successful businessman and lay leader in the Methodist Church. The new building on Madison Avenue was officially opened on October 27, 1909, when President William Howard Taft, using a golden key, unlocked the doors for public use.<sup>6</sup>

Another and more immediately pressing problem was the injustice that society condoned in its treatment of youthful criminals. In 1898 the *Commercial Appeal* recorded, without comment, the treatment given by the police to a 10-year-old Negro girl who had been picked up by a detective for stealing. The girl was locked in a cell in a dark corner of the station house and told stories about "‘dead men’ and other subjects calculated to inspire terror in her mind."<sup>7</sup>

The practice of confining children taken in crime with older criminals was common throughout the nation. Progressives were provided an example of reform in the work of Judge Ben B. Lindsey of Denver, Colorado, who was largely responsible for a Colorado law of 1901 that brought into existence a juvenile court and stipulated that young offenders be segregated from older criminals. In Memphis the need for special provisions for delinquent children was recognized as early as 1900, when city councilman William LaCroix undertook to create favorable sentiment for a reformatory or industrial school.<sup>8</sup> Two years later a committee of citizens, composed of Judge C. W. Heiskell, Judge John Harris, and John R. Godwin, investigated institutions in other cities and returned "full of enthusiasm" for the reformatory movement.<sup>9</sup>

Between the idea of the reformatory and its reality lay the hard route of practical politics. In 1903 the work of raising funds for a reformatory was begun by a benevolent women's organization, the Friends of the Needy Circle of the King's Daughters, which subscribed \$1,000 to the project. Shortly thereafter the Shelby County Court appropriated \$25,000 for the project. At the same time the Court appointed a committee to ask the State Legislature for funds, but an appropriation bill was killed in the Senate on the grounds that east Tennessee should not be burdened to support a west Tennessee institution.<sup>10</sup>

Two weeks after the unfavorable action of the State Legislature, the *Commercial Appeal* called on the people of Memphis

and Shelby County to build their own reformatory and subscribed \$100 to the cause. By May, 1903, a little over \$26,000 of the required \$75,000 had been collected, and a committee of the County Court arranged for the purchase of a site.<sup>11</sup> Seven hundred acres of land six miles east of the city were acquired for \$32,000.

A major obstacle immediately presented itself. The purchase had been made from one of the members of the court, Squire N. C. Perkins. Shortly after the announcement of the purchase the county attorney held the committee could not make a purchase from a member of the court. Perkins promptly resigned and announced that the property was still for sale. The county attorney, still not satisfied, insisted that a trusteeship be formed and empowered to make all contracts for the reformatory. His recommendation carried and three squires of the court and two members of the King's Daughters were named as trustees.<sup>12</sup>

Now it was the women trustees who blocked the purchase. They did not like the Perkins deal, and felt it was the obligation of women, when given a public trust, to execute it in a manner above reproach. The squires, while they may have wanted to give a brother court member the profits of this land sale, also felt the sale was a legitimate one, since the price was fair and the land suitable. They were genuinely convinced of the need for a reformatory. Unaccustomed to dealing with women reformers, and irked by them, they sought, unsuccessfully, to have them removed from the trusteeship.<sup>13</sup>

Other opinion joined the women trustees in condemning the Perkins deal. The *Commercial Appeal* was exasperated. "The Worshipful County Court," it declared, "has gone the limit; in fact, played the fool in a limitless manner with the bridle off." That Shelby County did not yet have a reformatory was because "one member of the court could not unload a piece of real estate on the county. . . . Had there been any graft in the matter or any jobs to be farmed out, the matter would have gone

through slick as a whistle. . . . It is almost enough to cause an outraged public opinion to clean out the filthy nest and drum the offending squires out of the community.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the court was moved to change its mind and in the following year it purchased a tract of land with suitable buildings near Bartlett, Tennessee, a small community about fifteen miles east of Memphis.<sup>15</sup>

The establishment of a reformatory was a solution to only one part of the problem of dealing with delinquent children. Progressive theory held that court systems designed to deal with the adult law violator were unsuited to handle juvenile cases. It was, therefore, urged that a juvenile court be established, and sentiment for the project was actively fostered by the women of the Nineteenth Century Club and the Memphis Playground Association.<sup>16</sup> Such an alteration of the structure of the city government required an enabling act of the State Legislature, and soon after E. H. Crump took office as mayor under a new commission form of government, the Legislative Council enacted the necessary local statute and the court was established.<sup>17</sup> Presided over by Judge P. Harry Kelly of the City Court, the Juvenile Court was considered modern and humane, and was operated in conjunction with the county reformatory. In the first year of its operation it handled 354 cases, a number that increased to 762 in 1916.<sup>18</sup>

Another development of the progressive era was a further rise in the status of women. Business enterprise produced the canons of “conspicuous consumption” and “conspicuous leisure” that dictated new roles for the wife of the well-to-do businessman. She organized with other women to become a seeker after culture, to promote worthy civic enterprises, to advance her social status, and through the number of her activities to reflect the economic importance of her husband. Even women of the middle class enjoyed a measure of leisure, not through the possession of surplus wealth, but through an increased use of labor-

saving devices in the performance of domestic tasks. For the unmarried woman, machine-age urbanization brought a new freedom, or perhaps the illusion of freedom. The increasing demand for women office workers provided opportunities for independence that women had never before possessed. Throwing women into a working relationship with men was the first important step towards a merging of the standards of the two sexes.

In the spring of 1898 the members of Memphis' august Nineteenth Century Club heard from a female lecturer the news of their emancipation. The days were gone, she said, "when viney-twiney young women . . . were ready to twine about any masculine pillars that stood by the wayside."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the clinging vine had become the rambling rose, and in Memphis one of the most striking indications of women's new freedom was the manner in which they organized to espouse practically every conceivable worthy cause. By 1909 more than thirty clubs had been founded in the city. There is, said the *Commercial Appeal*, "a B.B. Social Club that will consume Turtle soup and 'cuss' the umpire and the P Wees will sow bird seed where it will do the most good. . . . Already students from abroad are commenting on the wonderful growth of Socialism in our midst, and are trying to puzzle out the cause."<sup>20</sup>

Most of the women's organizations, as in other cities, sought to enrich the cultural life of their members. New found wealth and leisure in themselves were not convincing marks of gentility; one had also to acquire a speaking acquaintance with philosophy, literature, and the arts. Acquiring culture through an organized program had its advantages. The dosage was moderate and palatable, and the community could see that it was being taken. Among some of the better known women's organizations of this type were the Women's Club, founded in 1890 to read "literary papers," and the Talkitanti Circle. The latter organization was founded by Mrs. Gilbert D. Raine, who was

described as a "potent factor in the intellectual life of Memphis."<sup>21</sup> Another women's group with strong cultural ambition was the Salon Circle, founded by Jewish women of the city in 1903.

The women's organization without peer was the Nineteenth Century Club, founded in 1890 by "a little band of women thirsting for knowledge and . . . higher culture."<sup>22</sup> While it sometimes seemed that the club existed to provide a social status for its members, it could boast of study departments in art, literature, music, drama, philosophy, and "social economics." A characteristic meeting took place on the night of February 8, 1900, when members of the literary department gathered in one of the club's study rooms in the old LaSalette Academy to spend "An evening with Ibsen." The program began with "an exquisite rendition" of an instrumental waltz number on the piano, followed by the introduction of the subject for the evening by the chairman. Said the chairman: "Our prophet for the evening is Henrik Ibsen, the Shakespeare of Norway. To me the most forcible lesson Ibsen teaches is individuality. Be you who you may, king or peasant, you are a man and your individuality should be to you of the greatest importance."<sup>23</sup> After the chairman's introduction came the paper "which was very clear and placed Ibsen on a very high pedestal. It was listened to with great interest." The meeting, concluded the reporter, was "a feast of reason and flow of soul, and intellectually one of the most brilliant events the club has known."

The Nineteenth Century Club grew to such an extent in membership and prestige during the first decade of the new century that on occasion it exerted a decisive influence in obtaining reform measures from the city government. In 1898 the Club was instrumental in securing the appointment of a police matron to handle women prisoners.<sup>24</sup> The group was also active in promoting the cause of education about tuberculosis and had much to do with the establishment of the tuberculosis hospital

in 1909. It sponsored traveling libraries and almost invariably could be found supporting causes for bettering the lot of children.<sup>25</sup>

Less concerned with providing its members culture and social status, and more concerned with good works, was another Memphis women's organization, the King's Daughters. As a Christian service organization, it originated the plan, and took the initial steps toward raising funds, for the Shelby County boy's reformatory. As worthy an undertaking was its work towards erecting a home for children with permanent afflictions. The King's Daughters' Home for Incurables was opened in 1909 and thereafter continued to be the organization's major project. Funds were raised through an annual "Tag Day," when the women of the group invaded the business district to "tag" shoppers and businessmen for donations.<sup>26</sup>

Another group, also charitable in purpose, was the Sunshine Society. In 1903 it had thirty-two circles that concerned themselves with poor relief and tending to the special needs of those who were in jail.<sup>27</sup>

Like most American cities, Memphis had its problem of the working girl. As young women from rural areas came into the city for employment, they faced a difficult initial adjustment. Of the several organizations attempting to aid in the adjustment, the most active was the Women's and Young Women's Christian Association.<sup>28</sup> Organized in 1875, it was not only the oldest women's group in the city, but one of the most outstanding in achievement. Its first work was that of visiting the poor and establishing a reformatory mission. The mission, dedicated in 1875, was expanded in 1908 through financial help from a benefactor, J. N. Oliver. The Ella Oliver Refuge, erected on Walker Avenue, was dedicated to the social and moral rehabilitation of girls who had turned to prostitution. The principal work of the association was that of providing inexpensive and homelike living quarters for underpaid working girls. In 1887



the association opened its first home, the Young Women's Boarding Home. The work was expanded in 1894 with the purchase of a home on Shelby Avenue, made possible by a \$6,000 gift from Hu L. Brinkley, a prominent businessman of the city. The building was named the "Anne Brinkley Home" in memory of the donor's mother. When Brinkley died in 1904, he left the association \$40,000 towards building a new Anne Brinkley Home, a seven-story structure on Second Street. It was completed in 1906 and provided accommodations for nearly two hundred girls.<sup>29</sup>

The progressive spirit, with its emphasis on a fuller participation of the people in government, gave impetus throughout the country to the movement for women's suffrage. During the first decade of the twentieth century the movement in Memphis received only the indiscriminate kind of enthusiasm that club women of the period were apt to show for any new idea.<sup>30</sup> The *Commercial Appeal*, reluctant to see women play any role except the one assigned to her by tradition, showed little enthusiasm for the suffrage movement. "We have a few women suffragists in the South, but the blessed creatures do not mean it. . . . The idea of attending ward meetings . . . will never be a pleasing subject of contemplation to the Southern woman."<sup>31</sup>

By 1914 the women's suffrage movement had extended beyond the confines of the club room. On April 25, two women's suffrage organizations, the Memphis Equal Suffrage League and the Political Equality League, held a rally in Court Square. A week later Court Square again heard pleas for a recognition of women's political rights from Mrs. A. B. Pittman and Rabbi Max Fineschriber.<sup>32</sup> The issue even invaded the conservative precincts of the academic world when debaters from Tennessee's three normal schools met at Memphis Normal School, later Memphis State College, to discuss it. Memphis suffragettes who had been demonstrating the previous week in Court Square were given a special invitation to attend.<sup>33</sup>

That some women were pressing for more than just suffrage was brought to the attention of the Memphis public when women candidates on nonpartisan tickets were announced for the school board elections of November, 1916. Yearly mounting deficits in the school budget, inadequate equipment, and the perennial problem of underpaid teachers provided the cause for the women office seekers. In the election, two of them were victorious, the first to hold this office.<sup>34</sup>

Public health was an important progressive concern. The connection between the physical well-being of the individual and the well-being of society was not lost to socially conscious civic leaders. It was this awareness, combined with scientific advances towards understanding the causes and cure of disease, that led to the development of several municipal health programs.

Although Memphis had established a public health office in 1838, it was not until 1879, after the yellow fever epidemic, that provisions were made for a public health program as a major part of the municipal government. The epidemic convinced many that such a program was necessary for the survival of the city, and in the city charter act of 1879 there was a provision for a municipal Board of Health.<sup>35</sup>

Despite this initial step, public health work was hampered by crude notions still prevailing concerning the causes of disease. In 1884, for example, the president of the Board of Health recommended the drainage of the holes in the bed of the Bayou Gayoso because of his belief that "miasma arising from these offensive pools cause malarial fevers of a very intractable type."<sup>36</sup> By the mid-nineties the germ theory of disease was finding acceptance, making possible the development of a scientific public health program. With the election of J. J. Williams as mayor in 1898, Dr. Heber Jones was appointed president of the Board of Health, and under the supervision of these two men measures were taken to incorporate the new knowledge into

the program. At the insistence of Dr. Jones the city began to dispose of its garbage in incinerators.<sup>37</sup> Two new departments were created, one of sanitation and one of bacteriology.

One of the immediate concerns of these new departments was to protect the public from the sale of impure milk. Most of the milk consumed locally was produced on the outskirts of Memphis by "city dairies" that had only a small pasture for their cows and no facilities whatever for raising feed. Much of the milk was sold in the city by pushcart vendors.<sup>38</sup> The city passed an ordinance in July, 1898, providing that dairies producing milk in the city must be licensed and then only after passing inspection.<sup>39</sup> The law seems to have been enforced, for three years after its enactment the *Commercial Appeal* mentioned that "the milkmongers of Memphis are hauled up and fined for selling impure milk" with "a regularity that rivals a muezzin's call to prayer."<sup>40</sup>

In 1903 the Board of Health added a food inspector to its staff. An indication of the need for such an official is suggested by the board's condemning, in 1907, 167,824 pounds of food.<sup>41</sup>

Preventive medicine through the use of vaccines was encouraged by the Board of Health. In the fall of 1901 Dr. Jones required that as a condition of admission to either a public or private school, a child should be vaccinated against smallpox. His sweeping rule provoked opposition. Even the *Commercial Appeal* professed not to understand why "40,000 healthy children shall have injected into their veins poison from diseased kine" because "a few negroes who wallow in filth in the bottoms contract the disease and come into Memphis."<sup>42</sup> Dr. Jones had issued his order, the editorial went on, out of an "idolatrous worship of a theory of which the best that can be said is that it is like Rabelais's religion—'a great Perhaps.'" To make vaccination compulsory, it said, was "a species of tyranny unworthy of the age in which we live." In spite of such protests, the board stuck to its decision, and the city attorney, John H. Watkins,

gave an opinion that Dr. Jones was within his rights in making vaccination compulsory.<sup>43</sup>

In 1909, by the provisions of the commission government charter act, the Board of Health underwent reorganization. The mayor of the city became a commissioner of health, which office gave him "general supervision over the office of superintendent of health and matters relating thereto." The new act provided for the appointment of a superintendent of health by the Board of Commissioners and for the creation of the divisions of sanitary inspection, chemistry and bacteriology, contagious diseases, school inspection, and dairy inspection.<sup>44</sup>

The special division for dairy inspection was created to make certain that producers observed the rules of sanitation in processing their milk. Although the old Board of Health had inaugurated a pure milk campaign, it was handicapped by lack of personnel, and much remained to be done. Led by the new superintendent, Dr. Max Goltman, and with the full co-operation of the new mayor, E. H. Crump, the health department energetically pressed its inspection policy. But the dairymen, for more than a year, balked at the radical changes that they were required to make in their processing, particularly taking issue with the health department on the inspection of their herds for tuberculosis.<sup>45</sup> By the summer of 1911 only a few of the dairies could meet the city's standards. In his weekly health bulletin, Dr. Goltman told the people of Memphis that "This condition of furnishing unclean milk to the community" would have to stop. It had "brought about a great deal of sickness, and this sickness to a large extent among babies, many of which die as a result."<sup>46</sup> Unless the dairies could produce milk meeting health department requirements, he wrote, the city government would ban the use of their milk and import what was needed. Threatened with such drastic action, the dairymen capitulated. On July 18, they reorganized their association and pledged full co-operation with the health department.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile other measures were being taken to improve public health. In 1911 four white visiting nurses and one Negro nurse were added to the staff of the department with the object of furnishing skilled nursing to families unable to pay for it. After an ordinance of 1910 regulating the practice of midwifery, the nurses were especially valuable for their assistance at childbirths. In 1911 a milk dispensary was established by the department with the assistance of a fund obtained by public subscription. Visiting nurses supervised the work of the dispensary, giving instructions in the modification of milk for infant feeding and dispensing free milk to the poor.<sup>48</sup> For the schools, a system of medical inspection was inaugurated, and four school nurses were appointed in 1912.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to its direct attack on poor health conditions, the department engaged in an energetic campaign of public education. Pamphlets and bulletins were issued explaining the cause and treatment of contagious diseases, and once a week Dr. Goltman issued a news report on the progress made towards a healthier city.<sup>50</sup>

The development of specialized methods of treating illnesses required hospitals. Although Memphis had seven hospitals and sanatoriums in 1900, only two had modern staffs and equipment.<sup>51</sup> The oldest and most reputable of the private institutions was St. Joseph's Hospital, founded in 1889 through the efforts of a Memphis priest, Father Francis Moening. In October of that year, St. Joseph's began operation in a three-story building staffed with Franciscan Sisters brought to Memphis from Lafayette, Indiana. In 1901 another floor was added to the building and in 1910 it was further enlarged and modernized.<sup>52</sup> The other principal institution, the City Hospital, moved out of its old frame building on Union Avenue in 1898 to provide a location for Forrest Park. It was rehoused in a modern \$80,000 structure with accommodations for 120 patients on Madison Avenue.<sup>53</sup> The City Hospital was used primarily for charitable

work and its patients served as objects of clinical study for students of the Memphis Hospital Medical College.

Expanding population soon made the facilities of the city's two principal hospitals inadequate. In December, 1909, ground was broken on Madison Avenue across the street from the City Hospital for a large new Baptist hospital to be erected from funds donated by Baptists and public spirited residents of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee.<sup>54</sup> By 1912 the Methodists of the tri-state conference were laying plans for a \$250,000 hospital, but it was not until 1922 that they succeeded in getting their institution chartered.<sup>55</sup>

Beginnings were made to meet specialized hospital and medical needs. In 1902 the Board of Health noted with concern an increase in the number of cases of tuberculosis.<sup>56</sup> Six years later the disease had become so widespread that a campaign was begun to educate the public about its cause and cure. A tuberculosis exhibit was opened on Main Street emphasizing that the disease was not inheritable but communicable and that it could be successfully treated by rest. On a designated Sunday, physicians took over the pulpits of the principal churches in the city in order to advise Memphis church attenders on the most effective known means of avoiding the disease.<sup>57</sup>

The principal problem was that of isolating patients, and in 1908 the city made a beginning by opening the City Tuberculosis Hospital. It was only a meager beginning. The hospital consisted of two small cottages "pathetically poor and inadequate," located in South Memphis near the foot of the Mississippi River bridge.<sup>58</sup> Only patients in the last stages of the disease were sent there. The purpose of hospitalization was not to attempt cures, but to get the virulent cases out of circulation and to provide a place where "a man or woman suffering with tuberculosis could go to and end the days in peace."<sup>59</sup> The hospital was supported by a small appropriation from the Board of Health and by private donations.

The first baby hospital in Memphis was opened in 1912 by the Bachelors of Memphis, a social and philanthropic organization of young businessmen. Its successful operation, limited as it was, revealed the need for greater effort in this field, and in 1914 the city opened a \$15,000 children's hospital as a unit of the City Hospital.<sup>60</sup>

The development of hospitals was only one way in which Memphis earned its reputation as a medical center. Another was the development of two medical colleges. The older one was the Memphis Hospital Medical College, established in 1879 by Dr. William R. Rogers, to be operated in connection with the City Hospital.<sup>61</sup> The second was the College of Physicians and Surgeons, chartered in 1905. The founders of this institution were mostly physicians who had been connected with the Board of Health during the Williams administration, but who, after Williams' defeat in 1905, were removed from their positions. Dr. Heber Jones, president of the Board of Health under Williams, was the president of the new institution.

The new medical school became a political issue when its officials made application to the city to use the facilities of the City Hospital on the same basis as the Memphis Medical College. The rivalry between the two institutions was heightened by the fact that the successor to Dr. Jones as president of the Board of Health, Dr. W. B. Rogers, was the president of the Memphis Medical College. Moreover, one of the members of the Memphis Medical College faculty, Dr. B. G. Henning, was also a member of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. After protracted and heated argument, the Legislative Council agreed to grant the College of Physicians and Surgeons the privileges it had requested.<sup>62</sup>

The College of Physicians and Surgeons had a brief existence. In 1911 it became part of the University of Tennessee Medical School when the latter institution located in Memphis.<sup>63</sup>

The advances in scientific medicine after 1880 and their application in Memphis brought about an improvement in the city's health conditions. In 1880 Memphis was regarded as one of the most dangerous places in the United States in which to live. By 1900, sewerage, artesian water, and an understanding of the germ theory of disease were established foundations on which the city could erect its program against disease. The principal task between 1900 and 1917 was implementing the germ theory with a program of action by the Board of Health, and the Board exercised considerable vigor as it undertook the execution of this task.

But despite the considerable effort that was put forth to improve the city's health during this period, the problem of disease continued to be a pressing one.<sup>64</sup> Tuberculosis had been hardly touched and remained the city's most virulent killer. In 1914, 340 persons died from the disease, and in 1915 it was estimated that "there were not less than 1000 tubercular patients in Memphis."<sup>65</sup> Among children under fifteen, tuberculosis killed more than measles, scarlet fever, croup, and diphtheria combined. Pellagra was another leading cause of death, a fact suggesting that many of the people of Memphis still clung to their rural diets.

The continuing influx of rural people into Memphis during this period tends to obscure the significance of the work that had been done to promote good health. Rural Southerners were notorious for their chronic ailments and presumably many came into the city with established diseases. Another drawback to a successful health program was the susceptibility of the rurally derived newcomers to medical quackery. The pages of the *Commercial Appeal* abounded with advertisements of patent medicines and healing contraptions like Dr. A. T. Sanden's "new Herculex Electric Belt" which would impart a "soothing" stream of "galvanic electricity" to one's system at night while he slept and which was guaranteed to cure all ailments.<sup>66</sup>



There were many practitioners, too, like "Dr. J. Newton Hathaway" who had "mastered every phase and detail of chronic diseases," who had never had a dissatisfied patient and who had cured more chronic diseases "than any ten practitioners in the South."<sup>67</sup>

With problems like these to overcome the city could not be expected to produce immediate and dramatic results in its fight against ill health, despite the fact that it was one of the most vigorously prosecuted phases of the progressive movement in Memphis.

The hygienic reform that followed the yellow fever epidemic of 1879 initially required large outlays of public funds, since an extensive paving and sewerage program was involved. This necessarily hampered the development of other public enterprises, one of which was education. By the decade of the nineties, however, the city was able to devote more attention to its educational system, and bond issues during this period financed the construction of six brick school buildings, the first erected since 1873.<sup>68</sup> This was only a beginning. Successive annexations and a rapidly mounting population called for more building, and between 1900 and 1910 seventeen new grade-school buildings were added, four of which were for Negroes.

In general, new construction followed the west-to-east axis of the pattern of city expansion. Madison Heights School, built in 1902, Idlewild, in 1903, and Snowden, in 1909, were all in the eastern territory annexed in 1899 and 1909.

After 1909 Memphis school authorities were forced to meet the expanding need for education at the high school level. Poplar Street High was built and occupied in 1898. In 1911 Central High was opened, its location on Bellevue Street and Peabody Avenue being at that time very near the geographic center of the city. In 1910 the old Peabody School became the high school for Negroes and remained so until the construction of Booker T. Washington in 1926.

During this period, attempts were made to modernize and standardize the curriculum. In 1898 a beginning was made toward a high school physical education program when a "Professor" Pfaff of the Germania Turnverein was engaged to instruct students in physical culture.<sup>69</sup> A significant departure from the old formalized curriculum occurred in 1906, when manual arts was placed in the program for boys. In the same year the Board of Education made one year of stenography and bookkeeping compulsory in the high school curriculum.<sup>70</sup> Three years later the board was forced to take a stand on a phase of school activity that had not officially been placed in the curriculum. An order was issued prohibiting kissing in schools. Slips were printed and pasted on all schoolbooks cautioning the owner not to kiss anyone or be kissed in return, since this type of social communication provided a likely avenue for the transmission of germs. The Board made a special point of including teachers in the order banning kissing.<sup>71</sup>

While there was a steady development in the physical plant of the Memphis public school system, it was a growth made against a background of political squabbling and frequently unsatisfactory conditions of tenure for teachers. The principal administrative official of the Memphis schools was the superintendent. As an appointee of an elected five-man Board of Education, he was entrusted with broad powers to carry out the Board's policy. From 1892 until he was elected to Congress in 1906, the superintendent was George W. Gordon, an ex-Confederate brigadier general. General Gordon was an honored and highly respected member of the community, and it was this fact that probably enabled him to administer the schools with a minimum of political disruption. After Gordon, the superintendent's tenure became precarious, especially during the period between 1910 and 1915, when the office was held by five different persons.<sup>72</sup> The trouble was, commented the *Commercial Appeal*, that "Politics and factionalism have divided the board

into two sections and politics and factionalism control not only the selection, but also the retention of officers.”<sup>73</sup>

By 1912 political factionalism on the school board was seriously hurting the schools. An election of board members that year brought in a complete new group, all friendly to the city administration. Since, by a curious working of city law, the board-elect could not take office until January, 1914, the incumbent group was forced to contend with a steadily worsening situation. By July, 1913, the school deficit had reached \$210,000, and attempts to liquidate it by an increase in the school tax were resisted by the board-elect and the city administration. As a result, when school opened in the fall of 1913, there were no funds with which to pay teachers, and on October 1, when they were due their first check, the teachers received warrants instead. Neither Mayor Crump nor the board-elect would endorse the warrants, and the banks refused to cash them. Crump's attitude was that the situation had resulted from mismanagement on the part of the incumbent board, and it would have to resolve the crisis in whatever manner it could.<sup>74</sup>

Apparently, when as much political capital as possible had been made out of the situation, and in the face of mounting public indignation and the threatened closing of the schools, the board-elect, on November 1, agreed to take up the warrants.<sup>75</sup> But resolving this crisis did not end the financial troubles of Memphis schools. Succeeding boards continued to be plagued with chronic deficits, and for reasons of political expediency, the only solution to the problem, that of an adequate increase in the school tax, was customarily passed over for some kind of makeshift.<sup>76</sup> And despite all the pious concern for the plight of the teacher that came from the mouths of politicians and the pens of editorial writers, it was the teachers, by being grossly underpaid, who continued to suffer the greatest injustice from those elements in the community that resisted adequate taxation for schools.

Between 1909 and 1919 the salaries of grade school teachers ranged from \$25 per month for a beginner serving in an apprenticeship capacity to \$75 per month for a regular teacher who had completed eleven years of service.<sup>77</sup> As year after year went by without a salary increase, the grade school teachers began the year of September, 1918, with a strike that was terminated after four days when the Board of Education and the City Commission issued solemn resolutions that they would attempt to secure a tax raise sufficient to increase salaries. This was done, and an increase of \$10 per month was secured in February, 1919.<sup>78</sup>

If the way to progress in public education was torturous, the course of another movement, the crusade for prohibition, was even more so. Many of the city's inhabitants, mostly of the Protestant middle class, ardently espoused the legal suppression of strong drink. But the city government found it expedient to nullify the prohibition law after it had been mandated by the state.

One of the first publicized spokesman for the cause of prohibition was a representative of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Mrs. Ada Unruh, who spoke in 1898 to members of the Court Street Presbyterian Church.<sup>79</sup> Two years later she returned on the same mission, this time to the Central Baptist Church. The results were disappointing. Mrs. Unruh remarked that "it was the smallest audience she had ever addressed in her twenty years of temperance work."<sup>80</sup>

In 1902 the Anti-Saloon League of Tennessee brought its campaign for a state prohibition law to Memphis. "We have entered Memphis at last," said the Reverend John Royal Harris, state superintendent of the League.<sup>81</sup> Perceiving the danger of a crusade, the *Commercial Appeal* hastened to record its opposition. It observed that "men who never draw a sober breath during the session [of the State Legislature] so long as they can buy or 'bum' a drink made the most impassioned appeals for restrictive legislation."<sup>82</sup>

On January 17, 1908, advocates of a state-wide law held a mass meeting and mapped out a campaign to be directed "from all Protestant pulpits."<sup>83</sup> Two days later Mrs. Mary H. Armor, vice-president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, arrived in Memphis to stimulate enthusiasm for the cause with another meeting at the Central Baptist Church. Unlike Mrs. Unruh's meeting, this one was highly successful. When the crowd finished singing "Tennessee's Going Dry," to the tune of "Bringing in the Sheaves," the "whole church was trembling."<sup>84</sup>

The mass meetings were only a prelude to the excitement that arose when the prohibition issue was interjected into the campaign of 1908 for the Democratic nomination for governor. Competing for the nomination were Malcolm R. Patterson and Edward W. Carmack, both giants in Tennessee politics and both possessors of great oratorical ability. On the evening of May 30, 1908, the contestants met in the Auditorium on north Main Street before eight thousand people to debate the issue of a state-wide prohibition law. Carmack was in favor of such a law, while Patterson favored local option. No victor in the debate was formally chosen, but the *Commercial Appeal* thought that popular judgment after the debate favored Patterson's position.<sup>85</sup>

The primary election brought victory to Patterson, but did not kill the effort to pass a state prohibition bill, for the new State Legislature was predominantly prohibitionist in sentiment.<sup>86</sup> In Memphis, the threatened passage of the bill evoked considerable protest, which was expressed most forcefully at a meeting on January 8, 1909, in the Memphis Merchants Exchange with "practically every business concern in Memphis represented."<sup>87</sup> The following day the *Commercial Appeal* editorialized on "The Growing Danger to Liberty." The paper blamed the threatened state-wide law on "preachers in Nashville" and said that whenever "a minister of the gospel decides to get into

politics he ought to be required to get out of the pulpit." Three days later it leveled its fire at one of the leading clerical prohibitionists in Memphis, the Reverend William E. Thompson of the First Methodist Church. He was charged with being a "political preacher," one of Christianity's "greatest handicap[s]."

A week before the bill was scheduled to come before the Legislature for a vote, a delegation of Memphis businessmen went to Nashville to state their case against it, but were prevented from doing so by what the *Commercial Appeal* called a "wild mob of statewiders."<sup>88</sup> It looks, said the paper, "as if Memphis must be governed or misgoverned by a mob without right of petition, the right of redress, or the right of protest." On January 19, the State Legislature passed the bill. Governor Patterson vetoed it the following day, but it was immediately repassed over his veto and became law.<sup>89</sup>

In Memphis there was no closing of the ranks behind the law. When it went into effect on July 1, 1909, and for the next five years, it was ignored. Yet the issue continued to be discussed, and it provoked a high level of interest in 1913 when former governor Patterson abandoned the cause of local option. Patterson, no doubt, realized that prohibition had deeper roots than he had reckoned, and that politics could be made more enjoyable by sailing before the wind. He also had to overcome the embarrassing misfortune of having been caught in a state of stupefaction in a Nashville vice raid.<sup>90</sup> In November, 1913, Patterson announced his conversion to the cause of prohibition and embarked on a speaking tour in the cause of a national prohibition law.<sup>91</sup> Reaching Memphis in February, 1914, he told an audience of six thousand people of "his own dramatic struggle and victory over liquor."<sup>92</sup>

Patterson's recitation may have given pause to a few, but the prevailing sentiment in Memphis remained opposed to prohibition and officials of the city government found it politically expedient not to enforce the law. While the crusade against

strong drink was fought with enthusiasm in the rural South in the progressive era, it failed to take hold of many of the rural immigrants who moved into Memphis. They were too disorganized a group to unite in such a cause, and their state of disorganization made many of them want liquor and the environment of the saloon.

Another reason for the opposition to prohibition in Memphis lay in the vested interest of the powerful liquor and saloon business in the city. But the simplest, and probably the truest, explanation of that opposition lay in the character of the city. Memphis was almost proud of its historical reputation as a hard-drinking river town. It was booming as a resort city to which people came from miles away for a good time. Memphis still wanted to be Memphis.



## *The Politics of Reform*

MAYOR JOHN JOSEPH WILLIAMS was a man of Chesterfieldian deportment. In coping with the most ruthless political opponents he never lost his poise or his inbred Southern gentlemanliness. He combined with this happy bearing an ability to follow a labyrinthian course of political expediency among conflicting interest groups. His most substantial support came from the business community, to which he represented stability. It could count on his resistance to unsettling crusades for moral reform which sometimes called for heavier taxes. After all, part of the money for the upkeep of the city government might just as well be raised by assessments on the gambling interests, a practice that was traditional anyway. Moreover, Williams was honest, as politicians went. Few, if any, of the city's tax dollars found their way through venal channels into the pockets of Williams or the members of his political organization.

In January, 1902, Williams came up for re-election. The *Commercial Appeal*, having strenuously opposed his candidacy against Mayor Lucas Clapp in the 1898 election, now urged Williams to "stand on his record," adding, "we do not believe



any organization can accomplish his defeat.”<sup>1</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* was right. Williams was re-elected without opposition and with him a Legislative Council that generally supported his policies. Thus, with the support of the city’s largest newspaper, and with no organized opposition, there were good reasons for Williams to assume that his second administration would be even more successful than his first.

Yet there was dissatisfaction with some of the Williams policies. Church-goers were constantly being affronted by open violations of the laws covering gambling and the Sunday closing of saloons. Sin so blatantly flaunted offered a broad target for denunciation. A concerted attack was made by members of the clergy on Sunday, March 16, 1902, when, by previous arrangement, they gave over their Sunday sermons to an excoriation of the evils of commercialized gambling and Sunday openings.<sup>2</sup> On other occasions pointedly political sermons were preached, as when the Reverend Hugh Spencer Williams, pastor of the Court Street Cumberland Presbyterian Church, brought Williams under the whip for not enforcing the law.<sup>3</sup>

Few were as adept at needling the administration as that colorful evangelist from Georgia, Sam Jones. His opinion of Memphis was aired in a letter to his folks at home that was printed in Memphis. He wrote:

I spent last Sunday in Memphis and preached in the First Methodist Church. That city is a dirty hole. Saloons, drygoods stores, groceries, etc., open Sunday morning for business on Main Street just like it was Monday. You can buy anything from a cravat to a mule in Memphis on Sunday.

Baseball galore, and against all this there is very little protest. The state of things in Memphis would be unthinkable in Atlanta. Memphis is a wide-open city. . . . But I was told that Memphis’s treasury is empty. Streets torn up and no money to fix and pave them. Too much money going for beer and boodle . . . ; no wonder they are bursted.<sup>4</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal* denied that Memphis did business on Sunday and commented that “There is an old-fashioned idea

that ministers of the gospel ought to be a little more scrupulous with the truth than other people, but the reverend jayhawker from Georgia doesn't chime in with that idea." <sup>5</sup> In a later editorial the paper said the Sunday closing law could not be enforced by the "spasmodic ebullition of the church element in one of its periodical fits of high pressure morality," particularly when that element "forgets to register, forgets to vote, forgets to pay poll tax, and forgets that we have any public questions at other times." <sup>6</sup> Anyway, said the *Commercial Appeal*, there was a more serious evil to be dealt with—"the general and growing practice of sending children to saloons and corner groceries for beer."

Very likely the "spasmodic ebullition" of the church group would not have posed a serious threat to the stability of the Williams administration had it not been for the revolt of Walker Wellford, a native of Memphis who had achieved success as a cooperage manufacturer. In January, 1903, Wellford was one of a committee of two hundred citizens selected by Mayor Williams to hear a report of city engineer J. A. Omberg on the poor condition of the city's streets. The essential facts laid before the committee were that the cost of modernizing the streets would amount to some \$4,000,000 and that the city had no money in the treasury. Did the committee want higher taxes or poor streets? Wellford, who had "always supported Mayor Williams," was dismayed. "I like many others," he later wrote, "could not understand with the high rate of taxation why the city was in its deplorable condition." <sup>7</sup> When Mayor Williams failed to answer "very pertinent questions" about what the city did with its money Wellford demanded access to the city's books. <sup>8</sup> Wellford said he acted in the public interest. "I thought before heavier tax burdens were imposed . . . it was desirable to know the cause and suggest just such an examination as a business house would have made under the same conditions." <sup>9</sup> The *Memphis Morning News*, espousing

Wellford's crusade, stated that his motive was merely "to see for himself as a citizen . . . how affairs of the city were conducted."<sup>10</sup> Others, suspecting Wellford's motives, were prone to accept the explanation offered by Park Commissioner John R. Godwin. Godwin thought Wellford was trying to discredit the Williams administration because the Legislative Council had refused to extend a ground lease held by his Chickasaw Cooperage Company.<sup>11</sup>

The Mayor's refusal to permit him to examine the city's books provided Wellford with added incentive to battle in the cause of civic righteousness. Surely the Mayor's reaction indicated that he was trying to keep a veil of secrecy over the murky practices of the administration crowd. Wellford hastened to the law firm of Carroll, McKellar, and Bullington to enlist the aid of his friends, William H. Carroll and K. D. McKellar.<sup>12</sup> Their opinion was that Wellford, as a citizen and a member of the corporation of the City of Memphis, was entitled to examine the corporation's books. But Chancery Court Judge F. H. Heiskell declined to grant the requisite mandamus, whereupon Colonel Carroll went to Nashville to appeal to the State Supreme Court. In June, 1903, that body decreed that Wellford be given the privilege of examining the city's accounts. Wellford immediately set to work; determining not to entrust the investigation to a Memphis firm, he employed the services of the National Audit Company of St. Louis.<sup>13</sup>

Walker Wellford was not the savior of Memphis to all the people. The *Commercial Appeal* quickly dubbed him "Expert" Wellford and stated that before he had made his request to examine the city's books he "was hardly known in this community."<sup>14</sup> The paper had no objection to an investigation of the city's financial condition, but thought it "very questionable" whether Wellford was the man to undertake it. On the other hand, the *Morning News* and the *Evening Scimitar* supported the Wellford crusade and commended him for his willingness

to spend nearly \$4,000 for auditing services in the interest of civic virtue.

The National Audit Company made its report on October 10, 1903. It revealed nothing more startling than that there had been a "general lack of system in the accounting methods of the City, each department apparently being managed according to the opinion of the officer in charge. . . ." <sup>15</sup> On the basis of the report the worst that the *Morning News* could say of the administration was that the investigation showed "methods of conducting the public business such as would bankrupt any private concern on earth in the course of a few years." <sup>16</sup> Some professed to be scandalized by the "revelation" that the Mayor's fourteen-year-old son was on the city's payroll as a sewer inspector. <sup>17</sup> Otherwise, reaction was mild, and the *Morning News* sadly commented that "The people of Memphis have grown so accustomed to misgovernment that they are not so easily shocked as cities which have been more fortunate in their municipal officers." <sup>18</sup> As for Wellford, he "knew" that the administration was corrupt, and that during the investigation Williams had books burned that could have proved it. <sup>19</sup>

The Wellford investigation, if it had no other effect, provided the reformers with a leader and an issue around which they could organize. It mattered little if, as some charged, Wellford's motives were more personal and less exalted than those of the clerical reformers—their objectives were the same. Besides, Wellford moved easily in clerical company, and as reform sentiment gained momentum his name was increasingly allied with those of prominent ministers taking advanced positions in the battle for civic virtue.

The cause of the reformers was placed in the political arena in the Legislative Council election of 1904. An anti-administration ticket was selected by Wellford, who personally went to each candidate to secure his promise to run. Then, with Wellford making arrangements, a mass meeting was called at which

administration candidates were denounced.<sup>20</sup> The *Morning News* took up the cry. Williams was accused of "Lining up the Negroes" to vote for his candidates; the issue was "Joeism or no Joeism."<sup>21</sup> The election on January 7, 1904, was a roaring climax to the campaign, marked, as the *News* stated, "by the use of torch and pistol in the hands of a lawless and riotous mob."<sup>22</sup> Memphis' underworld lords, Mike Haggerty, George Honan, and Mike Shanley, played prominent roles in the day's events, their most notable contribution being the theft of the ballot box in the Ninth Ward.<sup>23</sup> The *News* charged that this act showed the administration was "driven by desperation" from fear of losing the election, and said the "people of Memphis have submitted to many outrages at the hands of the administration, but this is the crowning act of infamy."<sup>24</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* called the proceedings "disgraceful" but blamed Wellford's "outs" for causing the trouble.<sup>25</sup>

While there was apparently no organized system of pay-offs by dive keepers to members of the Williams organization, the administration did have a working relationship with the saloon and gambling interests, and facing the possibility of a lost election it was doubtless willing to accept whatever services men like Haggerty, Honan, and Shanley could render. Wellford, himself, has testified that he knew of the threat to the ballot box and that he sought to counter the plot by the use of men from a St. Louis "detective agency."<sup>26</sup>

Friends of the administration won most of the important offices. Nevertheless, the reformers renewed the attack by calling a mass meeting to protest election frauds and to name a Committee of Fifty to direct and coordinate the opposition to the administration. Charges were made against police chief J. J. Mason for indulging in profanity on election day while in uniform. Then the Committee called on Mayor Williams and demanded that he enforce the laws governing vice, gambling, and Sunday closing.<sup>27</sup>

Very likely Williams doubted that reform sentiment was either genuine or extensive, but being a practical man he decided to order a strict enforcement of all ordinances that had been violated and to await the reaction that he thought would discredit the reformers. On February 2, he gave sweeping orders to the police to close all saloons at midnight, even on Saturday, to shut all houses of prostitution, and to suppress gambling completely.<sup>28</sup> Memphis, said the *Commercial Appeal*, "is to be a Sunday school town after this—the cleanest place this side of the river Styx."<sup>29</sup>

The day after Williams' reform edict, Memphis was a changed city. Saloons closed promptly at midnight, and the "knights of the green cloth" were forced to continue their dice games in the alleyways and along the river bank. The most impressive evidence of change was seen in the red light district, moving an editorial writer of whimsical mood to pen this picture of Gayoso Street:

In very truth had the tenderloin been smothered in the robes of reform, and the blaze of lights did not invite to the gilded quarters of sin. The crimson lamp was extinguished at the stroke of 12 and the foolish virgins had no care to tend the wicks. Over all the pink precinct was stillness, stillness, stillness.

The clink of the beer glasses could not be heard by the plain clothes men. . . . The noise of the festive piano was stilled. . . . It is said that the red lights will soon give place to blue, to be in harmony with the spirit of the crusade.<sup>30</sup>

Williams, with doubtless a little relish, pressed his reform into a sensitive area. He asked the members of the Tennessee and Chickasaw clubs—organizations for the socially elite—to refrain from poker playing, which had become "notorious," and from dispensing liquor after midnight on Saturday.<sup>31</sup> The Mayor pointed out that the enforcement of the law in such cases would be somewhat embarrassing, since the club members were representative of a "substantial type," and many of them were members of the Committee of Fifty.<sup>32</sup> The *Morning*

*News* thought this was going too far, whereupon Mayor Williams suggested that the Committee of Fifty list the laws it wanted enforced and the violators it wanted arrested.<sup>33</sup> The upshot was that the directors of the Chickasaw Club decided to abide by the law. The Tennessee Club refused to commit itself, but it was understood that it would close on Sunday.<sup>34</sup>

One group, the clergy, was satisfied with the thoroughness of the Williams reform. A committee of Protestant pastors, with the Reverend William H. Neel, D. D., as spokesman, visited Williams to congratulate him on his determination to enforce the law. The Reverend William E. Thompson of the First Methodist Church told Williams that he thought 90 per cent of the people were behind him.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Mayor's reform seemed airtight, the reformers remained alert for any violation of the law. In April, they went on the warpath again. Perceiving, perhaps, that perfect zeal could become dulled with inaction, Walker Wellford and the Reverend William E. Thompson had warrants sworn out against seven prominent businessmen, charging them with "conspiring to violate the Sabbath by . . . planning . . . to conduct an exhibition of automobile races."<sup>36</sup> All the accused "positively disclaimed" any connection with the affair, and one of them, Sam Carnes, the utility magnate, stated that he knew absolutely nothing about the supposed automobile race until he was hustled into court.<sup>37</sup>

As a result of this battle, some people came to feel that reform could be a nuisance, particularly when it seemed to be an outlet for the eccentricities of Walker Wellford. The *Commercial Appeal* thought that with a "few more Walker Wellfords in this town . . . Memphis would take to the dismal swamps."<sup>38</sup> Even the Reverend Thompson's position as one of the foremost preachers of the city did not make him invulnerable. Press criticism of his role in the affair was so persistent that the Methodist churches of the city took a vote on the pro-

priety of his action. The results showed a divided sentiment in most churches.<sup>39</sup>

Reform seemed to have run its course. Some dives that had closed down quietly opened again. The political opposition to the Williams administration, deriving its strength from the reform issue, doubtless would have collapsed at this juncture had it not been for one of the most insolent floutings of the law in the history of the city. On the night of July 11, 1904, a gambling den that was in full operation on DeSoto Street was raided by five deputy sheriffs, one of whom was a Negro. About forty men and women had been tied together to be taken to the station house, when George Honan, George Deggs, Mike Haggerty, and Harry Keene came to their rescue. On entering the dive, Haggerty was reported to have said to Deggs, "Go back and get shotguns and we will kill all the s—of—b's."<sup>40</sup> On second thought, the four decided not to wait for shotguns. Using their pistols, they disarmed and shot the deputies and freed the prisoners. The Negro deputy, Houston Mitchell, died immediately. Another deputy, Thomas J. McDermott, mortally wounded, was taken to the hospital where he lived long enough to name George Honan as his murderer.<sup>41</sup>

The reform movement blazed anew. The *Morning News* demanded that Honan, Haggerty, and Deggs "be given their just desserts or Memphis must acknowledge herself the most pusillanimous . . . community in the whole civilized world."<sup>42</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* declared that "The shooting down of officers in a crap dive by those who are notorious violators of the law is 'the limit.' Surely we have reached the climax. . . . Memphis must have a moral cleansing."<sup>43</sup> Official action came quickly. The men named assailants in the raid were taken into custody by the police, and Judge Thomas Moss, Assistant Attorney-General David A. Frayser, and Mayor Williams expressed their determination to clean up the city.<sup>44</sup> This determination did not hurt the murderers. In view of Memphis'



notorious record of failure to bring criminals to justice during this period, it is not surprising that none of the men charged with the crime was convicted. George Honan, the only one brought to trial, was defended by Congressman Malcolm R. Patterson, who succeeded in convincing the jury that the affair had been precipitated by the insolence of the Negro deputy.

It was natural that the shooting, so shocking in its effect, would be put to the uses of political expediency. Three days after the affair two "monster meetings" were held to protest conditions and to take appropriate action. Captain Dabney Scales of the police department, working closely with Walker Wellford,<sup>45</sup> introduced resolutions calling for the resignation of Williams and Police Chief Mason. The Committee of Fifty was re-activated and instructed to call on the Mayor to ask him categorically if he intended to enforce the law.<sup>46</sup>

Two days later Williams replied to the Committee with a dignified statement of his position. He desired "to state emphatically that during . . . his term of office all character of vice, instead of having increased . . . had materially decreased, not only relatively in proportion to the increase of the population, but actually, as compared with the conditions when Memphis was one-half its present size."<sup>47</sup> Williams then went into the laws that governed gambling and vice. He pointed out that during the formulation of the charter act of 1879 the question of how much power to give the city government in the suppression of vice and gambling had been thoroughly discussed. Left unanswered, Williams held, was the question whether the city should have the power to suppress gambling or whether it should be charged with simply controlling this evil. The law as it was finally written stated that the city should "regulate, control and suppress" gambling and prostitution,<sup>48</sup> but in the mayor's opinion, it was better to regulate and control than to attempt an ineffective suppression, and he insisted that was all the law required.

Williams stated that in the past he had done no more than follow the policy of his predecessors by collecting from the gambling element of Memphis revenues which were used for public improvements. But, he said, this practice now had been abolished in response to the demands of the city press and pulpit. He then challenged that a comparison be made of the crimes growing out of gambling in Memphis with crimes of the same type in other cities, and stated that with the exception of the previous week's unfortunate affair there had been for some time no serious crime in any Memphis gambling resort.

Nor did Williams believe that it was possible to suppress prostitution or Sunday liquor selling. He said he would attempt an absolute suppression if the people of Memphis wanted it, but he warned that the law would have to be enforced fairly. He would not allow "the regulation, control or the suppression of gambling or other evils to become a political football to be kicked about by political factions."<sup>49</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal* thought Williams' reply a masterly statement that "must have confounded his political enemies."<sup>50</sup> But reform was now a hot political issue, and in such an atmosphere reason was not likely to have much influence in determining the course of events. The *Morning News* peremptorily rejected Williams' reply as "utterly unsatisfactory."<sup>51</sup> The Committee of Fifty also rejected it, but could think of no course of action except to turn the matter over to another general meeting. This resulted only in a decision to propound more questions to the mayor and demand yes or no answers. Williams apparently gave satisfactory answers; at least, no further action was taken.<sup>52</sup>

The DeSoto Street riot may in the long run have produced a more meaningful result than the short-lived outbreak of indignation that followed it. For after this affair the heroic posturings of Walker Wellford and his ministerial associates gave way to a more studied approach to the problem of reform, fol-

lowing more characteristically the pattern being laid down nationally in the progressive movement.

One of the basic assumptions of progressive theory was the natural goodness of the average man. He could not, therefore, be responsible for the social evils that goaded reformers to action. To progressives whose concern was urban reform the devils were likely to be the franchise grabber and the political boss, and all the evils that marred the perfection of urban society could very likely be laid at their feet. The way to reform, then, was to delimit the powers of elected officials and make the people more directly responsible in the affairs of government. As a result of this conviction many constitutions throughout the country were amended in an attempt to give the people a more direct voice in government. Memphis reformers chose to follow the same course.

In the summer of 1904 the reform movement began to include among its supporters some of the more conservative members of the community, among whom were Judge C. W. Heiskell, former mayor John R. Flippin, and James H. Malone, a prominent lawyer. Because of their reputations for honesty in their personal and professional lives, the public believed they were motivated more by an interest in public welfare than by a hope of personal political preferment. The addition of these men to the movement made reform an inviting cause for some of the younger and politically ambitious members of the legal profession. A group of these, led by K. D. McKellar, sought through an organization called the Jackson Club to effect amendments to the city charter to provide "home-rule" for Memphis. In the fall election of representatives to the State Legislature candidates representing the reform faction supported a legislative platform in favor of "home rule against one-man power and political bossism," the auditing of the city's books and the preservation of vouchers and books of original entry, and the "divorcement of policemen and firemen from

politics.”<sup>53</sup> The “boss” they were after was, of course, Williams, who had his own candidates in the field.

In the election the reformers were victorious and the Williams candidates were defeated. The Shelby County delegation at Nashville, headed by State Senators John R. Flippin and Gilbert D. Raine, was pledged to secure the desired amendment to the city charter.

Anticipating charter revision, K. D. McKellar, in January, 1905, read to the members of the Jackson Club a preliminary set of amendments which two months later were substantially incorporated into the city charter.<sup>54</sup> Signed by Governor James B. Frazier on March 10, 1905, the amended charter provided that no franchise could be granted or sold to a public service corporation except by ordinance and with the approval of the public in an election for that purpose. Accountants were to be hired to make a yearly examination of the city's books, and all subordinate officers of the city government were to be selected in accordance with civil service rules. In the controversial section that dealt with gambling, the phrase “to regulate, control, and suppress gaming houses” was amended to “to suppress gaming houses and punish gaming by fine and imprisonment.”<sup>55</sup>

The new charter provided for changes in the structure of the city government. Hitherto, the Legislative Council had been a unicameral body, its two boards, that of the Fire and Police Commissioners and that of Public Works, sitting together, with the mayor presiding, to enact laws. Now the Legislative Council was made into a bicameral body with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners becoming the upper house and the Board of Public Works becoming the lower house. Each of the Boards was enlarged by the addition of two members. The mayor was made ineligible for re-election and his term of office was extended from two to four years.<sup>56</sup>

The new charter was progressive in its provisions respecting

franchises, civil service, and the mayor's tenure and in its concern for increased representation for the people in government. But the bicameral and larger council it formed was to be replaced later by another, more typically progressive change to a smaller, more compact and unified commission form of government.

The three months following the passage of the new law were characterized by such confusion that much of the business of the city ceased. With a view toward testing the validity of the new act in the courts, Williams contributed to the confusion by refusing to carry out certain requirements of his office as stated in the new instrument. Through the route of appeal, the charter reached the State Supreme Court in June, and was declared valid.<sup>57</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal*, having taken a highly critical view of the Wellford phase of the reform movement, was severe in its attack on the new charter and those who had espoused it. Memphis, said the paper, "is the only city in the world that has a farce-comedy for a charter. Those . . . who like to work out acrostics, riddles and conundrums and those who delight in 'a paradox, a paradox, a most ingenious paradox' will all find matter for their entertainment in the new charter of Memphis."<sup>58</sup> The paper saw no idealism in the reformers, declaring, "There isn't a man of adult intelligence in this city who does not know that the Reform crusade was merely a movement to put the Outs into office to which they had never been elected, and to provide a lot of hungry buzzards with a carcass to feed on."<sup>59</sup> It called the members of the clergy who had been active in reform "long-nosed hypocrites trying to re-establish the Blue Laws of Connecticut in this city," a "lot of Pharisees of the holier-than-thou vintage trying to improve the morals of everybody but themselves."

It is quite likely that the approach of the city elections in November intensified the *Commercial Appeal's* groanings.

The "Outs" had outmaneuvered the Williams forces in the election for the State Legislature in 1904, and there were few who believed that they would be content with charter revision alone. For too many, reform was not an end, but a means to political office. It was no naïve company of psalm-singers that opposed Williams in the election of 1905, but an organization that already had been successful in one contest and was determined to win another.

Now it was the administration forces that complained of irregularities in electioneering. When the opposition refused to enter the regular Democratic primary in September and announced an Independent ticket, the *Commercial Appeal* charged that it was planning to use the votes of two thousand Negroes who had registered for the November election.<sup>60</sup> The issue, said the paper, was whether the people of Memphis preferred "a ticket of good businessmen selected in a legalized primary by white men, or a ticket conceived up a dark alley . . . by a nameless coterie and relying for success on the negro vote."<sup>61</sup>

The greatest grievance of the administration faction was its inability to get an equal division of judges and clerks for the election, because the commissioners of registration were of the anti-administration faction. In October a committee of fifteen from the administration forces sought to carry a petition to one of the commissioners of registration seeking equal representation. But the commissioner's secretary, backed by what the *Commercial Appeal* called "political hucksters and scavengers," refused to accept the petition and a brawl ensued.<sup>62</sup>

It was also rumored that Mike Haggerty and his associates of the Turf Saloon had been brought to the anti-administration point of view, an accomplishment which, if true, insured that the voters of the Fourth Ward would be substantially pro-reform when their ballots were cast.<sup>63</sup>

To the charges made by the Williams forces the opposition replied only with a plea to the public to have faith. The *News*

*Scimitar* said the clerks and judges who were to supervise the election were "men of character" and the "voters will be unobstructed and the votes will be counted as cast." <sup>64</sup> And this time, it said, the police force would not "be permitted to terrorize voters and run them away from the polls."

The anti-administration faction announced its slate of candidates at a public meeting in the Lyceum Theatre on October 10. James H. Malone was named for mayor, John T. Walsh for vice-mayor, and among the several candidates mentioned for the lower board of the Legislative Council was one named Edward H. Crump, a Memphis businessman relatively unknown to city politics. At the same meeting the Independents announced their platform. Planks dealt variously with the annual auditing of the city's books, taking politics out of the police and fire forces, and providing open bidding for franchise privileges. When the plank calling for public ownership of utilities was read there was "hearty and prolonged applause," indicating that one of the pet ideas of progressivism was catching on in Memphis. <sup>65</sup>

In the campaign the administration forces dwelt on the theme that their ticket should appeal to businessmen and thinking people, while the opposition thundered the dangers of giving way to "big business." Williams could not possibly be the next mayor, said the reformers, because "he is the advocate of high assessments and high taxes for the poor and middle classes, and of low assessments for wealthy individuals and opulent corporations." <sup>66</sup> The election, they said, was to be "a fight of the masses, of the common people, against corporate influence and organized wealth." <sup>67</sup> Some of the "common people" may have found it puzzling that some of their champions were themselves associated with "opulent corporations."

On November 9, reform was victorious. The election of Malone and his slate was hailed by the *News Scimitar* as the result of a people's reform. The "people can be trusted at all times to

do the right thing at the right time," it said, "the people do not act against their own interests."<sup>68</sup> The *Commercial Appeal* saw Malone's election more as a matter of switched and stolen ballot boxes. It spoke of "unprecedented frauds" and said that "Never . . . in our wildest dreams did we ever imagine that such a brazen attempt would be made to debauch the ballot box as was made yesterday."<sup>69</sup>

The inauguration took place on January 3, 1906, in an atmosphere of bitterness prompted by persistent charges of fraud from Williams' supporters. But Williams, urbane to the last, smilingly handed over his gavel to Malone and received a plaudit from the new vice-mayor, John T. Walsh. Walsh, whose association with the reform group had been largely a matter of political expediency, was an old-line politician who appreciated a craftsman of the school to which he belonged. "Joe Williams," he said, "is the boldest politician I have ever known and the best mayor Memphis ever had."<sup>70</sup>

The talents of the new mayor, James H. Malone, were not especially political, but his choice as the candidate of the reformers had been excellent. Born in Limestone County, Alabama, at the age of eight he moved with his family to DeSoto County, Mississippi, near Capleville, Tennessee. In 1872 he took his law degree from Tennessee's famous school for lawyers, Cumberland University at Lebanon. His success as a practicing attorney in Memphis was notable, and in 1894 he was elected president of the State Bar Association.<sup>71</sup> The fact that Malone entered the campaign of 1905 untouched by politics enabled his backers to proclaim his political purity. And his unchallenged reputation for honesty in the practice of his profession, the serenity of his family life, and his attachment to the Methodist Church fitted him for his role.

As a reform administrator Malone was never able, as were Mayor Samuel H. Jones of Toledo, or Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey, to develop an organization or a personal



following which he needed as a base of strength from which to operate.

The new mayor made vigorous initial gestures of enforcing the law. He had hardly been inaugurated before he gave formal orders to Police Chief George O'Haver to enforce the Sunday closing laws. A little later, he personally visited police headquarters, and while the whole force stood at attention, he lectured on the necessity of impartially enforcing the law.<sup>72</sup>

For a while it appeared that at least the Sunday closing laws would be enforced. Every Monday two or three saloon keepers would appear in court to answer charges of having been open on the previous day. By September, however, the *Commercial Appeal* thought it detected a relaxing of the law and charged that some "favored" places had been permitted to open their back doors on Sunday.<sup>73</sup>

There is some evidence that the Malone administration was more concerned about prostitution than the previous administration had been. In the annual report of the police department of August, 1903, a Williams year, only ten persons were listed as having been arrested for keeping houses of prostitution.<sup>74</sup> At the conclusion of 1906, the first year of the Malone administration, the Criminal Court had dealt with ninety-eight persons charged with the same offense.<sup>75</sup>

The "suppression" of gaming houses, required by the charter act of 1905, was the most pointed challenge to the Malone administration and it failed to meet it. Few houses were closed. One episode illustrates this failure. In March, acting on orders from Vice-Mayor John T. Walsh, the police raided the Anchor saloon on Front Street, a resort owned by a "syndicate" headed by Mike Haggerty and Bud Deggs. Haggerty promptly advised the vice-mayor that if one of his places were raided again he would bring to light the fact that he still had in his possession two hundred ballots which he had not found necessary to use in the past election. Walsh, an old-line politician now cast-

ing his lot with the reformers, waited four months—why he waited is not clear—and then made public Haggerty's threat and denounced it as politically inspired.<sup>76</sup> It was an embarrassing moment for the reformers but they quickly regained their composure, and a committee of their faction, meeting in the Cotton Exchange, passed a resolution expressing confidence in Walsh and demanding that all dives should go.<sup>77</sup> Thenceforth, Haggerty's threat was forgotten, but also the administration's raiding of establishments belonging to Haggerty and his associates was abandoned.

In other, less spectacular undertakings the Malone administration was more successful. It succeeded, for example, in effecting a uniform tax rate throughout the city. When Memphis had made its major expansion in 1899, the newly annexed areas were given a tax rate lower than that within the city's old bounds on the grounds that the new areas could not be made responsible for the city's past indebtedness. As a phase of the general amending of the city charter in 1905, the State Legislature enacted the so-called Boyle Bill provisions for the equalization of the tax rate throughout the city.<sup>78</sup>

The Williams administration, no doubt respecting the interests of the wealthier classes in the suburban areas, where lower rates prevailed, failed to pass legislation necessary to make the Boyle Bill effective. The issue was so explosive politically that in the municipal election campaign even all the reform candidates had expressed opposition to the equal tax rate law. Shortly after the election, however, the new city attorney, Thomas Jackson, argued that since the equal rate was already law the city must enforce it. In February, the Legislative Council at Malone's insistence passed the necessary enforcement ordinance.<sup>79</sup> The achievement of a uniform tax rate throughout the city was a progressive step in simplifying the city's accounting procedures and it resulted in an overall lower tax rate. This reform, along with the introduction of more careful and detailed

methods of bookkeeping, fulfilled the promise of the reformers to give Memphis a better financial administration.

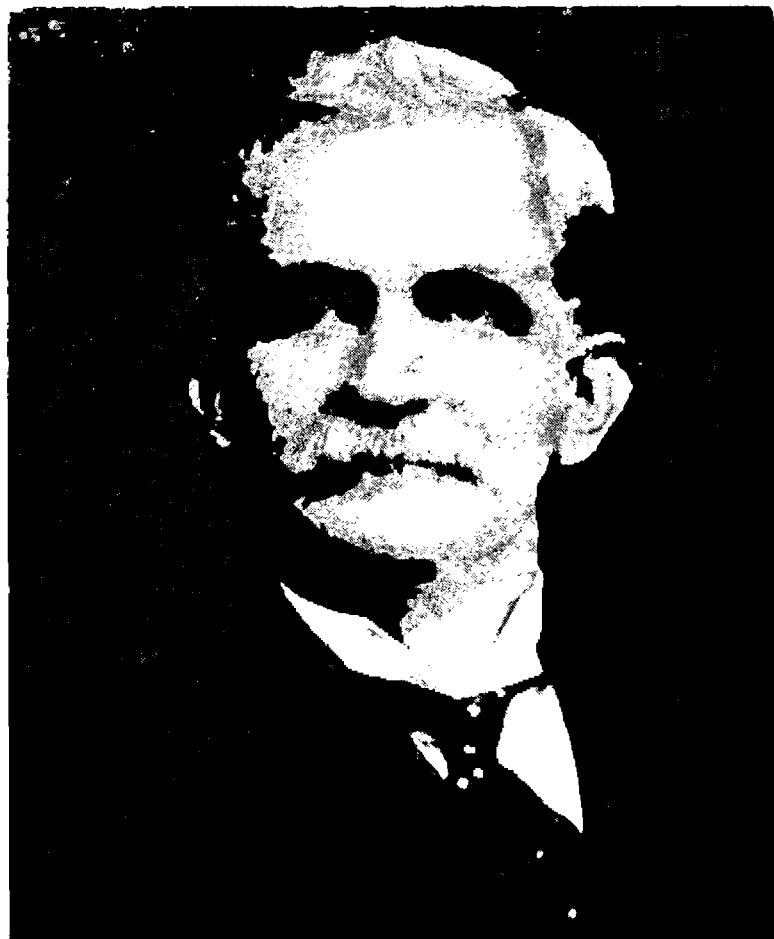
In the extension and modernization of urban services, Malone built on the foundations laid by the Williams administration. If the reputation of Williams' mayoralty rested on the sewers that were built during his term of office, Malone's was based on the streets and sidewalks that were laid between 1905 and 1910. The enactment of the front foot assessment law in 1908 was a powerful stimulus to street and sidewalk construction, improvements with which Malone was "particularly concerned."<sup>80</sup> So successful was the hard surfacing program that Malone left the city a "rocky foundation instead of . . . bottomless clay and mud."<sup>81</sup>

The years of Malone's mayoralty were ones of continuing prosperity and growth. The physical appearance of the city underwent a basic alteration with the construction of skyscrapers. The first year of Malone's term saw the completion of the Tennessee Trust Company Building and the Memphis Trust Company Building, each fifteen stories high. Prosperity and growth were also responsible for the growth of new suburban areas, a development that caused Malone in 1908 to propose that the city limits again be extended.<sup>85</sup> The Mayor's proposal was strongly backed by the City Club, a non-partisan organization of progressive businessmen.<sup>86</sup> As a result of this second "Greater Memphis" movement, the State Legislature in March, 1909, adopted Senator H. M. McKay's bill providing for the extension of the boundary lines of the city. On the south the new line was extended to South Parkway and on the north to include a manufacturing district and the north yards of the Illinois Central Railroad. The eastern limits were expanded to what today is East Parkway, including the town of Lenox and part of Overton Park that had been outside the city limits.<sup>87</sup>

The commendable accomplishments of the Malone administration might have been even more noteworthy had the mayor



John Joseph Williams



Left, Walker Wellford; Right, James Malone

not been harassed by opposition from the ousted Williams organization. The *Commercial Appeal*, still friendly to Williams, persistently attacked the Malone administration, charging that the effects of reform had been to increase taxes, pave the streets with dust, accustom the people to dishonest elections, and cause the discharge of competent firemen and policemen.<sup>88</sup> An unbiased observer might have pointed out that these evils had long been features of Memphis politics.



### *Commission Government*

**B**ETWEEN 1908 AND 1910 the political history of Memphis took a new direction. The progressive movement took hold, and was furthered by two developments. One was a change in the city charter creating a new form of government suited to the achievement of progressive goals. The other was the emergence of a strong political leader.

That the ideals of urban progressivism were catching on was indicated by the success of the reformers in the city elections of 1905 and by the adoption by the Williams group of some of the reform ideas. The old-fashioned machine way of political administration of the early Williams period, forced by the realities of Memphis politics to effect a working compromise with the lawless elements, and not overly concerned with efficiency, was through the force of public opinion beginning to lose ground.

But stronger political leadership than the reformers had yet shown was needed if their ideals were to be put into effect. Diverse elements in the electorate made the city's politics a perpetual cat and dog fight. Industrialization had developed a new wealthy class in Memphis, one which saw in the program

of urban progressivism a means of fosterings its Calvinistic ideals of bourgeois respectability. Frequently in conflict with this group were a large bloc of voters—the rural newcomers who were susceptible of political manipulation by machine politicians, and the Irish and Italian minorities whose infiltration into minor political offices and whose vested interest in the saloon business caused them to uphold the status quo.

It would take an effective political organization to reconcile these interests. The weakness of the Malone administration had been its inability to force a working political program through the conflicting concerns of the Memphis electorate. Joe Williams, on the other hand, though a talented politician, was too closely identified with the old order. Moreover, he was without the flair for personal dramatization that seemed to be the hallmark of so many progressive politicians. For Williams, endorsement of many of the shibboleths of progressivism was an act of political expediency for which he could muster no crusading zeal.

Memphis was ripe for a new political leadership that could capitalize on the increasing interest in progressive ideas among the city's growing middle class. Such leadership was at hand in the person of Edward H. Crump. It was his ability—even genius—that was responsible for much that was to be accomplished for Memphis in realizing some of the objectives of the progressive movement. Crump's task was made easier by a basic change in the city's charter that simplified the structure of Memphis' city government. The creation of the commission form of government, in which Crump played a leading role, was not only a means to progressive achievement but an attainment of a progressive objective. It came about, however, by a tortuous route, with the aid of some political chicanery that was hardly progressive.

The commission plan, accounted one of the most important municipal reforms of the progressive movement, was intended



to imitate in efficiency the methods of the modern corporation. It replaced the complicated and often unwieldy mayor and council form with an elective commission of several members who acted both as legislators and administrators of the various city departments. The smallness of the group, presumably, made it easier for the public to check on it as it enacted ordinances and awarded contracts.

The commission plan is generally said to have originated in Galveston, Texas, in 1900, when a hurricane and tidal wave destroyed about one-third of the city. To meet the emergency the people threw over their cumbersome mayor-council government for a commission of five members who were given considerable power to deal with the emergency. This innovation proved so successful that it was maintained permanently, and it ultimately spread to more than two hundred cities.<sup>1</sup>

Memphis actually had something like commission government long before the Galveston experiment. As in Galveston, it followed a disaster, the yellow fever epidemic of 1878-1879. With the city facing financial insolvency immediately following the epidemic, the State Legislature on January 31, 1879, repealed the city's charter and made Memphis a special taxing district of the state. On the same day the repeal act was passed, the Legislature passed the Taxing District Act to provide for an administration of the city's affairs. Administrative powers were vested in a Board of Fire and Police Commissioners of three members, one of whom served as president of the Taxing District. Two of them, including the president, were appointed by the governor; the other was elected locally. In addition, the Act provided for a Legislative Council that could pass ordinances within limits set by the State Legislature. This body, unicameral until 1905, was composed of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners; a Board of Health, made up of the chief of police, a health officer and a physician, and a Board of Public Works consisting of the five supervisors of public works.<sup>2</sup> Only

three supervisors were to be elected at first, but later all were to be. By subsequent charter amendments, principally in 1892 and 1898, many of the prerogatives of self-government were returned to the city, including the legal restoration of "Memphis" as the city's name and the creation of the office of mayor, to be filled by the vote of the people.

Under the Taxing District Act the affairs of the city were administered with more than usual efficiency and honesty. The principal objection raised against the Act was not the commission feature, but its not providing for enough home rule. "The people of Memphis are capable of governing themselves," declared the *Commercial Appeal*. "There has been no demand for a change in the laws governing the city"; the demand was that they be administered locally. "Home rule," stated the paper, "is the vital principle of every city government. It is what well governed municipalities have, yet the people of Memphis are kept in the dark while legislation is sneaked through and passed by men, the majority of whom never saw a city as large as Memphis."<sup>3</sup>

In seeking popular support for their program, the reformers echoed the "home-rule" cry when they pressed for the adoption of their amendments to the city charter by the State Legislature in 1905. By home-rule, however, they meant a system enabling them to escape the bossism of Mayor Williams. The bicameral council which resulted from their efforts was supposed to provide an internal check on the operations of the administration, while the increase in the number of city councilmen was to effect a broader representation of the people. And in the progressive era there was a widespread disposition to see in the "people" the source of all that was virtuous in politics. But this was not the kind of home-rule that the *Commercial Appeal* had in mind and the 1905 charter became a subject for frequent editorial animadversion.<sup>4</sup>

Dissatisfaction with bicameralism, abetted by political in-

genuity, led to a second but brief experience with commission government for the city. A political talent such as that possessed by Joe Williams could not remain unexercised for long, and Williams' ally, John Walsh, doubtless looked upon reform as merely a transitory phase of politics that posed the necessity of building a more stable foundation for his political future. In December, 1905, Williams and Walsh got together again and united their strength in the Shelby County Democratic Executive Committee in support of Malcolm R. Patterson as the state's Democratic candidate for governor in the following year's election. The fact that Walsh supported Williams illustrated how tenuous was the tie between Walsh and the reform faction. The latter, headed by K. D. McKellar and John McLemore, made a strong effort to secure Shelby County's endorsement of the progressive John I. Cox for governor.<sup>5</sup>

The Democratic Executive Committee supported Patterson, indicating that Williams and Patterson had worked out a mutually beneficial program for their political futures. But it was almost a year before the public learned the nature of the favor that Patterson, as governor, would be expected to perform for Williams. In October, 1906, the *Commercial Appeal* stated that Williams had assumed charge of a campaign directed towards securing the repeal of the new charter act and the Boyle Act. "As everybody knows," stated the paper, "the new charter was passed for the sole purpose of putting Mayor Williams out of business."<sup>6</sup> Just who was putting whom out of business was a matter of dispute. The *News Scimitar* charged that the purpose of the Williams-Walsh combine was "to pass a ripper bill through the next legislature and to throw Mayor Malone and all his associates, who were elected by the people last year, out of office."<sup>7</sup>

On October 25, a little more than a week after the strategy of the Williams-Walsh faction had been revealed, the issue was given its first test at the Shelby County Democratic Con-

vention. The Williams combine won an easy victory. Its candidates were designated as the regular Democratic nominees to the State Legislature from Shelby County, and a platform was adopted that called for the repeal of the Boyle Bill and the charter act of 1905.<sup>8</sup>

Before the October 25 Shelby County Democratic Convention, there had been talk of three political factions in the city: led by Walsh, Williams, and Malone. The convention, however, revealed that at the ward level of political machine making the Malone faction hardly existed and that the Walsh group had given way to the Williams interests. Chagrined by the outcome, the reformers announced a "People's Democratic Ticket," and a "People's Democracy Platform," and ringingly denounced Williams and Walsh at a mass meeting in the Lyceum Theatre. Malone, who had just returned to the city after a lengthy vacation, informed the crowd that he had come home to find the town "wide open," and that "while several people had circulated reports about his resigning or his coming home in a pine box, he was here to fight his enemies, and that he could look every mongrel in the face and whip every hound which had been barking at his feet."<sup>9</sup> In conclusion he exclaimed, "Give me a little more power, gentlemen, and I will whip the hounds back to their kennels; I will do it, so help me God!"<sup>10</sup> This was the kind of talk the reformers had been waiting to hear from Malone.

But the Mayor's fighting instinct had been aroused too late. In an election held in an atmosphere of intense bitterness, the Williams candidates won in Shelby County, and Malcolm R. Patterson was elected governor.<sup>11</sup>

With Patterson's inauguration in January, the course of charter revision moved quickly to its climax. Early in February, a State Senate committee reported a bill with provisions for vacating all municipal offices created under the charter act of 1905 and for the establishment of a municipal council of five. The

council, resembling a commission, was to have a president, a vice-president, and three commissioners. All, initially appointed by the governor, were to be elected for four years at the November election of 1908.<sup>12</sup>

The bill, though passing readily in the Senate, failed in the House, and was consequently held over until March when the State Legislature reconvened. The second attempt was successful. On March 15, two days after the reconvening of the Legislature, the new charter bill, known to its opponents in Memphis as the "ripper bill," was made law.<sup>13</sup>

The new charter, with its provision for the evacuation of all offices created by the act of 1905, retired Mayor Malone and the members of the Legislative Council to private life. On May 4, 1907, in an atmosphere perfumed by bouquets sent by well-wishers, the new city council, appointed by Governor Patterson, began its work. Presiding was J. J. Williams, and at his side, filling the vice-president's chair, was the ubiquitous John Walsh. The three commissioners were D. S. Rice, E. B. LeMaster, and Sidney M. Neely, all partisans of Walsh and Williams. Malone, having cleared his desk, did not remain to welcome his successor.<sup>14</sup>

The reformers did not acquiesce. Weeks before Williams assumed office they had filed an injunction in the Chancery Court attacking the constitutionality of the ripper bill. Chancellor F. H. Heiskell responded by granting a temporary order restraining the members of the municipal council from entering upon their duties, but he refused to make the injunction permanent.<sup>15</sup> Still persevering, Malone and his group took their grievance to the State Supreme Court. The court, shortly after Williams had taken office, held that since the charter act of 1907 contemplated an entirely new scheme of government, it was not an amending process as its framers had contended and it was voided.<sup>16</sup>

So, on June 22, Malone and his associates moved back into

the city hall to serve out the remaining two years of the term for which they had been elected.<sup>17</sup> Walsh, instead of being vice-president, was again vice-mayor, and Williams retired to begin planning anew the course of his political future.

For two years more, Memphis lived with the old mayor-council form of government. But the idea of commission government had taken hold of many progressive minded citizens who wanted more efficiency, less waste, and stricter enforcement of the law in the administration of city affairs.

After the failure of Williams' political venture in 1907, in which he used commission government as a vehicle, the *Commercial Appeal* ceased to support Williams personally, but its advocacy of commission government continued and was more serious. On July 19, 1908, as discussion of the merits of commission government was making the rounds of the city's business and civic organizations, the *Commercial Appeal* ran a double column editorial recommending that Memphis adopt the system. "The tendency in the development of municipal government," said the paper, "has been against the bicameral council. The idea that city government should be modeled after the national government is now in pretty general disfavor among the best students of municipal problems." The editorial pointed out that in 1879 Memphis had adopted a commission form, and its only fault was that it did not provide for enough home rule. But it was infinitely better than the "present malapert and mischievous form of government" which was "a curse to Memphis. . . . Memphis must look out for herself. The charter act of 1905 has been a miserable failure. It is a handicap to municipal progress. . . . It will have to go." Now in its advocacy of commission government, the *Commercial Appeal* was doing more than acting as a partisan of Williams. It was expressing a settled conviction.

The *Commercial Appeal* was not alone in its advocacy of commission government. Business and professional men of the

City Club announced their endorsement of it. The City Club, having begun its existence in 1906 with twenty-five persons, by 1908 had a membership of nearly four hundred progressive minded citizens. The Club, non-partisan in politics, was styled "One of the leading forces for good government" in the city of Memphis.<sup>18</sup>

In the fall of 1908 commission government became an issue in the election of delegates to the State Legislature from Shelby County. Two slates of candidates were offered: one, headed by P. Harry Kelly and Haden McKay, attorneys, called itself the People's Democratic Party and was pledged to commission government; the other represented the interests of the tenuous alliance of Vice-Mayor John T. Walsh and Mayor James H. Malone. On November 2, the day before the election, the candidates of the Walsh-Malone faction, realizing the hopelessness of being represented as the opponents of commission government, announced their conversion to the idea in a large advertisement in the *Commercial Appeal*. The *Commercial Appeal*, with little regard for the sensibilities of its advertisers, devoted an editorial to the announcement. It was, said the paper, like "the Devil rewriting the Ten Commandments" or "grabbing the scriptures and preaching the gospel from the pulpits."

The election resulted in a decisive victory for the slate of progressive delegates who had originally supported commission government. The *Commercial Appeal* gloated over the wreckage of the Walsh-Malone organization, calling it a "Smashed Machine." The vote, said the paper, "was a protest against machine politics in Memphis and Shelby County."<sup>19</sup>

With the assembling of the State Legislature in January, 1909, the Memphis charter bill was given priority on the calendar of proposed legislation. On January 22, the committee on municipal affairs unanimously approved a bill that provided not only for a commission form of government, but for the right

of recall of elective officials. The act was passed the following day and signed by Governor Patterson on February 12. It abolished the old bicameral council and substituted in its place a commission of four elective members. The law provided for six administrative departments: public affairs and health; police; streets; bridges and sewers; accounts, finances, and revenues; and public utilities, grounds and buildings. The mayor, in addition to his function of presiding over commission meetings and integrating the work of the administrative departments, was also to have charge of the department of public affairs and health.<sup>20</sup>

The first genuinely progressive commission government had been established in Memphis. This one was not a hastily contrived expedient as the first one had been, nor the product of devious politics, as had been the second. It was largely the product of progressive sentiment expressing itself through various business and civic organizations of Memphis. But even before commission government had matured to the point of legislation at Nashville, it had become closely identified with the political career of one man and was so to remain afterwards. The man was Edward H. Crump.





*Political Progressivism—  
The Mayoralty of E. H. Crump*

EDWARD HULL CRUMP came from a background that well suited him to understand Memphis and its people and to provide the progressive movement in the city with the leadership it needed. A rural immigrant himself, he was born on October 2, 1875, on a farm near Holly Springs, Mississippi, a quiet, tree-shaded town about forty-five miles south of Memphis. His father, Edward Hull Crump, Senior, like many others, had left Virginia for the rich soil of Mississippi. Shortly before the Civil War the senior Crump married Mollie Nelms, daughter of a planting family originally from North Carolina. During the war the young husband served as a captain in Morgan's Raiders, returning afterwards to the task of providing for his family in the face of the great handicaps the Reconstruction years brought to the rural South. The elder Crump did not live to witness the nadir of the family's fortune. He died in the yellow fever epidemic in 1878, at a time when his son, Edward, Jr., was hardly old enough to be without the attention of his Negro nurse. The task of keeping the family to-

gether thus fell to Mollie Nelms Crump. In later years, during the great depression of the 1930's when the people of Memphis were dispirited by the persistence of hard times, the son of Mollie Crump sought to hearten them by recounting the difficulties faced by his mother in the years after the death of her husband, recalling:

My mother had to take over the running of the place. She had no help; all the work was done by the family. Most everything we ate or wore came off that place. My mother made a little money by churning butter and selling it to a produce firm in New Orleans. Now, she wasn't used to that kind of life. She was a typical Southern woman; went to school in Louisville and Philadelphia; learned French there; still talks it like a native, and she's ninety years old now. Used to slaves and luxury. But when the hard times hit, she went to work and lived a plain, hard life.<sup>1</sup>

Young Crump, like many another boy of the rural South whose ambition had not been dulled by poverty, concluded that the land offered no hope of a better life. He turned cityward, arriving in Memphis at the age of seventeen. For the next several years he served as bookkeeper for the Woods-Chickasaw Company, carriage manufacturers and harness dealers. His advancement in the business world was rapid. By 1900, he was able to buy out his old employers, and in 1902 his success was registered by his marriage to socially prominent Bessie McLean of Memphis.

When once asked how he got into politics, Crump answered, "Frankly I don't know," but added, "My interest was an aggressive one from the day I cast my first ballot when I was twenty-one years old."<sup>2</sup> The section of the city where Crump began his political life required of aspiring leaders not only aggressiveness, but a considerable degree of audacity. In the old Fourth Ward all matters of politics were handled at the Turf Saloon by its proprietors, Mike Haggerty and George Honan. For a reformer to be elected to public office from that ward seemed almost a violation of natural law. And Crump was a re-

former, having identified himself with the reform sentiment that grew in Memphis after 1900. Haggerty and Honan had at last met their match, for Crump was elected the following year to the lower house of the Legislative Council.

In September, 1907, Crump announced that he was resigning from the Legislative Council. "The press of business," he explained.<sup>3</sup> One week later, with his private work apparently caught up, he announced that he would oppose J. J. Williams in the election of November 5, to fill a vacancy in the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. The period of Williams' political ascendancy had passed; on November 6, the *Commercial Appeal* announced the election of Crump as commissioner. He was "virtually an experiment," commented the paper.

The "experiment" was soon producing political razzle-dazzle that outdid Williams in his palmiest days. Taking his oath of office on the morning of January 2, 1908, Crump immediately asked that a meeting of the Board of Commissioners be called for that afternoon. At the meeting the new commissioner "unequivocally asked that the police be instructed to see that every saloon of every class and character . . . be closed at midnight."<sup>4</sup> Then turning to Chief O'Haver, the new commissioner stated that he was not going to depend on the police department to carry out his instructions, but that he "personally was going to see the orders obeyed."

On January 17, the Board attempted to have another meeting. The *Commercial Appeal* referred to it as "Mr. Crump's meeting"; the other four members of the Board were "merely present."<sup>5</sup> The following day Crump's stature as a reformer reached heroic proportions when he personally conducted three raids with twenty specially deputized officers. Said Crump: "I just wanted to show the police up. . . . If Chief O'Haver and his men cannot suppress gambling in this town, I can."<sup>6</sup>

The next sensation sprung by the reforming commissioner was to demand the suspension of Chief O'Haver on the grounds

that he was incapable of performing the duties of his office. At O'Haver's hearing before the commissioners the chief was three times fired by Mayor Malone at Crump's insistence and on as many occasions was promptly reinstated by the three remaining commissioners.<sup>7</sup> In the end, O'Haver remained chief, but only after having been made the butt of heavy personal abuse from Crump.

Crump's crusade against sin lasted hardly a month, but sin was a minor consideration. The public had been presented with a spectacle of a man slaying dragons.

In 1908, when the issue of commission government was being debated in Memphis, Crump was one of its foremost advocates. When the reform reached the stage of projected legislation, Crump went to Nashville to do what he could to pressure legislators and, incidentally, to call a senator from Chattanooga a "hound" when he raised some objections to the Memphis charter bill.<sup>8</sup> Seven months later, when Crump announced his candidacy for mayor, no one was surprised. The "foremost advocate of commission . . . government" pledged himself to a business government.<sup>9</sup> "Memphis," he declared, "should be conducted as a great business corporation, in which there are two hundred thousand stockholders, and not as a place to be exploited by politicians."

Five days after Crump's announcement, J. J. Williams, hoping, no doubt, to capitalize on his previous association with commission government, declared that he was in the race. For the first time in the history of municipal elections in Memphis the campaign produced extensive newspaper advertising. Williams had the advantage of possessing an old organization still loyal to him, while Crump brought to the contest only the vigor of his youth and his reputation as a reformer—a man who was not afraid of the "interests." The election of 1909 was between a candidate representing the old order and one identified with the spirit of progressivism who derived his support from a

younger generation of voters alive to the twentieth century ideals of progress and reform. The contest was close, for with over twelve thousand votes cast in the election, Crump was victorious by only seventy-eight.<sup>10</sup>

When Crump was sworn in as mayor on January 1, 1910, the people of Memphis who had backed the cause of reform hoped for something more fundamental than a few raids on gambling dens.<sup>11</sup> The public's heightened awareness of weaknesses in municipal government was caused in part by discussion of them in the press and at meetings of the City Club. In 1909 and 1910, another agency, the Bureau of Municipal Research, made an even more searching analysis of the organization of the city government, pointing out specifically some of its more serious flaws.

Municipal research organizations were not an uncommon feature of the self-improvement efforts of American cities during the progressive era. In Memphis the securing of a research agency was first undertaken by the City Club. In December, 1908, Dr. R. B. Maury, president of the Club, invited a representative of the Bureau of Municipal Research of New York to speak at a dinner given at the Business Men's Club. As a result of the meeting, a committee of interested citizens invited the New York agency to make a study of the business procedures and methods of the Memphis city government. Members of the City Club donated funds and the work began.

The report of the Bureau was made in October, 1909. Its principal indictment was that the city government had failed to incorporate strict accounting procedures into its business methods. "That the city of Memphis has not been more exploited and looted is due rather to the personal honesty of the majority of the men connected with the city government than to any system of checks and balances," the report said.<sup>12</sup> The administration was accused of "failure to collect revenues, repeated over-payment of claims, valuable city property leased for in-

adequate rental, purchase of supplies at ruinous prices . . . and spending more money than there is revenue."

Much of the Bureau's criticism implied a relationship between the municipal government and private business that was unnecessarily profitable to the latter. Accordingly, when Crump assumed office several months later he understood the political value of assuring the people of Memphis that under his administration they would not be over-reached by the corporate interests.

One of the first actions of his administration was to hold a series of conferences with the officials of railway lines running into the city, to secure the building of street underpasses. As a result, an agreement was reached whereby the railroads undertook the construction of eleven underpasses. By 1911 they had been completed for Carolina Street, Lamar Avenue, and Rayburn Avenue.<sup>13</sup> When one line, the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis, proved recalcitrant about fulfilling its part of the contract, Crump issued an ultimatum. If an underpass was not begun immediately, the city would tear up the railroad's tracks over Lamar Avenue.<sup>14</sup> The blunt tactics of the mayor produced the desired results.

Under Crump's direction the city government undertook to secure better service from the street railway system. Despite plans by the Memphis Street Railway Company in 1912 to abandon the use of all small cars for double-truck cars and to substitute collapsible doors for swinging metal gates, Crump remained unsatisfied. The people of Memphis, he contended, were not getting the service they should because the streetcar company was paying "dividends to a lot of Wall Street operators on watered stock."<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the city government demanded that the company stop using trailers on main lines, that it adopt a policy of issuing transfers, and that a crosstown line be built so that people going from east Memphis to west Memphis would not have to go to the business section of the

city to transfer.<sup>16</sup> Luke E. Wright, the chief counsel for the streetcar company, protested that compliance with such demands would require an expenditure of more money than the company made.<sup>17</sup>

The pleading of financial difficulties aroused no sympathy from Mayor Crump. If the streetcar company could not provide adequate service to its patrons, he said, then the city would run its own street railway service.<sup>18</sup> Faced with this threat, the Memphis Street Railway Company acceded to the demands of the city.

Indeed, the threat of municipal ownership was held over more than one public service institution during the period of Crump's mayoralty. What ultimately became the most spectacular battle in Crump's war with the corporations was waged against the utility companies.<sup>19</sup> In 1910, Memphis had two utility concerns, the Memphis Consolidated Gas and Electric Company and the Merchants Light and Power Company. The former furnished gas and electricity to the city's residential areas, while the latter supplied power to the central portion of the city and to large industrial concerns. In dealing with these companies, the efforts of the administration were not directed so much toward securing improved and cheaper service as they were toward obtaining their outright ownership. The issue of public ownership of lighting facilities went back as far as 1887, when the State Legislature had passed an act empowering Memphis to build or purchase its own light plant. In 1908, the Legislature passed another act, this time providing for the issue of \$1,000,000 in bonds to construct a plant. The sale of bonds, however, was so hedged with restrictions that no action was taken by the Legislative Council.<sup>20</sup>

Under Crump, official declarations favoring municipal ownership became more frequent. The power companies were accused of meddling in local politics, not co-operating with the city government, and charging exorbitant rates in order to line

the pockets of New York capitalists. The *Commercial Appeal* consistently opposed municipal ownership on the grounds that Memphis could not stand a further increase in its bonded indebtedness. The *News Scimitar* accused the morning paper of being the "mouthpiece" of the utility companies and of attempting "to stem the tide of public sentiment in favor of a municipal lighting plant."<sup>21</sup> The *Scimitar* predicted that the people of Memphis would win "the inevitable victory . . . in this fight which Mayor Crump has led for a municipal lighting plant."

In 1913, the issue again came before the State Legislature and again a bond issue was voted, in this instance subject to a referendum by the people of the city. The election, held April 8, 1915, resulted in an easy victory for the cause of public ownership.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently the city government entered into negotiations with the Merchants Light and Power Company to purchase its holdings, but the negotiations failed because the city refused to pay the price demanded by the company.<sup>23</sup>

Crump threatened the corporations with attack on another front. The city must force the railroads and other corporations, he said, "to a level with the individual taxpayers and make them pay on the same assessment values."<sup>24</sup> The mayor was especially bitter towards the railroads. The Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis "absolutely" controlled the politics of Tennessee, he said. He further declared that he had never ridden on a railroad pass since he had been in public life and that he would fight the railroads and the big corporations until they paid "their just proportion of the taxes." These pronouncements brought from the *News Scimitar* the joyful cry that "Mayor Crump has sounded a clear, strong note, and has thrown himself into the front of the fray. . . . Tennessee ought to be redeemed and emancipated from the thralldom of corporate control."<sup>25</sup>

Despite Crump's fulminations against particular corporations, he was supported by the Memphis business community.



While the assessments of some companies were increased, business generally was compensated by a low tax dollar and the financial benefits that resulted from an efficient municipal administration.<sup>26</sup>

One of the promises that Crump made in his campaign for mayor was that he would give the city an administration conducted on sound business principles. The degree to which he redeemed his pledge is best indicated by the changes that took place in the city's tax rate after he took office. In 1906, the first year a uniform tax rate was effected throughout the city, the rate was \$2.16 per \$100 of assessed property valuation.<sup>27</sup>

In August, 1911, when the City Commission published its *One Year and Eight Months under Commission Government*, the accomplishment pointed to with greatest pride was the reduction of the rate to \$1.58, the lowest it had been in the history of the city. What the commissioners failed to mention was that property assessments for 1911 had risen to \$80,368,620, an increase of about \$20,000,000 over the preceding year.<sup>28</sup>

The increase was easy to justify. From 1900 to 1910, the yearly rate of increase in assessment values was nowhere near the rate of increase in the actual value of Memphis property. One of the greatest weaknesses in the financial administration of the city prior to the adoption of commission government was the unwillingness or inability of the city to make its assessments of private and corporate property equitably. It was frequently charged by opposition groups that businesses and large property-holders were exempt from bearing their proper share of taxation. Under Crump's administration, assessments were brought more nearly in line with the actual value of property. This reform was long overdue. When accomplished, it lightened the tax burden for a majority of the city's small property owners.

The decrease in the tax rate notwithstanding, the city continued to expand municipal services. With the exception of

schools and hospitals, Memphis was spending an average of two and one-half times more on municipal services in 1914 than in 1902. For schools, the increase was eight times, and for the city hospitals, about four times. At the beginning of the century city budgets ran about \$1,000,000 annually; by 1914, over \$3,000,000.<sup>29</sup>

In the years between 1910 and 1916 the fire department put away its horse drawn vehicles for motorized equipment. Chief Cornelius T. Sullivan began experimenting with an automobile for use by the department in 1909, but it was not until 1912 that the first motor fire engine was put into service. After that, automotive equipment rapidly replaced the steam pumpers. In addition to improved equipment, there was a noticeable betterment of the morale and an increase in the operating efficiency of the department.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, improvements were effected in the police department by Police Commissioner R. A. Utley and Chief W. J. Hays. In March, 1911, the *Commercial Appeal* observed that the police department had "improved in appearance, in efficiency, and in courtesy during the last year. The officers are smarter, are neater in appearance, and do not look as if their time was spent chiefly in loafing around saloons."<sup>31</sup>

The improvement went deeper than appearances, although not deep enough. Two weeks after Crump took office he made a statement on crime in Memphis and promised he would do three things: rid the city of thieves and thugs, break up the practice of carrying pistols, and "clean up the dives which have flourished so long in this city."<sup>32</sup> There was an immediate increase in the activity of the police department. In 1910, a total of 10,241 arrests were made, compared with 6,774 in 1909.<sup>33</sup> More drastic measures were employed in an attempt to reduce the city's crime rate. Periodic roundups of transients and vagrants were made, and every Negro found on the streets after midnight was arrested.<sup>34</sup> After nine months in office Crump

declared that there was not "a single open gambling house in Memphis," and that the city was relatively free of vagrants.<sup>35</sup>

Yet this discipline lapsed, especially at election time, and neither the reforms effected in the police department, nor the adoption of vigorous measures of law enforcement had any effect on the city's worst crime problem—that of murder. The murder rate continued to rise during the period of Crump's mayoralty, reaching its highest point in 1916 with 89 murders per hundred thousand population. And this fact, as much as any other, suggested that murder in Memphis could not be curbed only by law enforcement, but was a problem that lay in the customs and the confused and shifting values of many people in the city.

Under commission government the Memphis park system underwent further expansion and improvement, in spite of a feud between the chairman of the park commission, Robert Galloway, and Crump. Galloway's exercise of sovereignty in the park commission had been absolute since his appointment as head of the commission in 1903, and Crump's propensity to exercise supervisory control over the commission nettled Galloway. In the spring of 1913, when Crump blocked the commission's proposal that the city purchase Jackson Mound Park, Galloway erupted. He suggested the commission tell Crump to "go to h--l . . . and get a new commission."<sup>36</sup> Galloway then dared Crump to debate the issue publicly, and if the mayor would accept, Galloway "would pay for the theatre and band and then 'eat him up.'"<sup>37</sup>

Despite discord, progress was made. In August, 1911, the public voted to issue \$275,000 in bonds to purchase a site for the holding of the Tri-State Fair, an annual event for Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee, and for its use as a playground and recreational park. The result was the purchase of Montgomery Park, once the scene of annual racing meets in which some of the finest horses in the world participated.<sup>37</sup> Two years later,

with Crump no longer opposing, Jackson Mound Park was purchased by the city and its name was formally changed to DeSoto Park, to please the more historically minded citizens of Memphis who were convinced that Hernando DeSoto had crossed the Mississippi River at that spot.<sup>38</sup> As a result of these acquisitions and the improvements that were made, the value of the park system, which at the beginning of 1911 was \$4,203,564, rose to \$7,000,000 by the beginning of 1915.<sup>39</sup>

The aura of reform, the vigor, and the decisiveness with which Crump's personality invested commission government confirmed in many the judgment that the first two years of this type of municipal administration had been a success. Crump had redeemed the pledge he had made in the campaign of 1909; Memphis had been given a "business" administration. Moreover, Crump's progressivism encompassed more than just reform and efficiency. He had stood firm against the railroads and the public service institutions, serving notice on them that the days of their overreaching the people of Memphis were at an end. There remained some, however, whose judgment was still reserved. With few exceptions, no fault could be found with the ends that the mayor had sought to obtain, but some critics found serious fault with the means employed to achieve the ends.

The most influential representative of those who had not given themselves over to the adulation of Crump was Charles Patrick Joseph Mooney, editor of the *Commercial Appeal*.<sup>40</sup> In August, 1911, during the registration of voters for the city election, the paper noted critically that Memphis was having its heaviest registration since 1870. Unfortunately, it said, such an apparently laudable accomplishment was effected by voters being systematically registered in every ward under the supervision of the police department.<sup>41</sup> The paper further observed that the Sunday closing law was no longer being enforced, and added it was beginning "to see the political shrewdness of

throwing the Sunday lid away. All the dive keepers are now enthusiastic and registering bums, black and white, that make business for their beer pumps.”<sup>42</sup>

When questioned about reports that city employees were registering Negro voters, Crump professed to have no knowledge of it, but added that “Constant unwarranted vilification of the city administration no doubt prompted many friendly to us to become very active in the registration, and it may have been that some connected with the city government acted indiscreetly.”<sup>43</sup> The source of most of the abuse being directed at the administration, said Crump, was “the Consolidated Gas and Electric Company and other corporations who will use every means in their power to defeat any one who has the temerity to oppose their plans.”

In September, an anti-Crump group, styling itself the “Old Hickory Club,” called a mass meeting of citizens to name a candidate to oppose Crump in the November election. Presided over by Hardwig Peres, a prominent Memphian who served ably on the Board of Education, the convention could do no better than call into the fray the battle-scarred former mayor, J. J. Williams. The platform could only “me’ too” the Crump administration by promising that it would give the city a business government.<sup>44</sup>

In its attitude toward the candidates the *Commercial Appeal* failed to show the zeal for Williams that it had in previous years, but it struck hard at Crump. “The mayor,” wrote editor Mooney, had made “his commission a one-man organization,” and had seized “not only the political machinery of the city, but that of the county.”<sup>45</sup> To win the election, he wrote, Crump had tolerated a return to lawlessness, for within “gunshot of Court Square or the police station” were “dives that would not be tolerated in the tenderloin of a mining town.” The police were active, Mooney charged, “only in the suppression of vice that is not privileged.”

Possibly as an antidote to the denunciations of the *Commercial Appeal*, the Crump forces staged a show of force by holding an "annual" municipal parade on September 25. With Crump at the head in a touring car, 1,400 city employees marched through the streets carrying banners proclaiming the accomplishments of commission government.<sup>46</sup> In the face of such a demonstration the efforts of the Old Hickory Club to attract attention to candidate Williams seemed futile. On October 29, just a little more than a week before the election, the supporters of Williams ran a full page advertisement in the *Commercial Appeal* in which they accused Crump of being "very vindictive in character and dictatorial in manner." It was only a gesture. When the votes were counted on November 9, Crump won the election by a five-to-one majority and Williams had suffered the worst defeat in his political career.<sup>47</sup>

The election of Crump in 1911 assured him the position of mayor until January, 1916, since previous to the election the State Legislature had amended the city's charter to extend the mayor's term from two years to four. At the end of two years, however, it was reported that Mayor Crump was "toying with the idea of running for sheriff."<sup>48</sup> His friends were trying to convince him "that he owed it to himself to run for some office with generous fees attached before leaving a political career which he began nine years ago." When asked about his intentions, Crump said, "I have intended to serve out my term as mayor, and then retire from politics to re-enter business."<sup>49</sup>

But four months later, the mayor did announce his candidacy for sheriff. His decision, he said, was the result of a desire "to break up some of the crooked work going on with the full knowledge of [Z. Newton] Estes," the Shelby County attorney-general, and to be in a position to "meet the assaults upon me personally . . . by the bloodthirsty outs."<sup>50</sup> As a candidate for sheriff, Crump placed himself in opposition to Sheriff T. G. Tate, who had been identified with the Crump

organization. Tate, however, irreverently announced that he was in the race irrespective of Crump's candidacy.

The campaign for county offices in 1914 was one in which no principles of government or administration were involved, and one, apparently, that offered little latitude of choice in the merits of candidates. It was, on the contrary, a demonstration of the extent to which those in political office in Memphis and Shelby County were willing to go in violating the principles of political decency in order to secure the highly lucrative county jobs.

Editor Mooney ground out editorials protesting the puppet-like behavior of the "sovereign" people. In July, the *Commercial Appeal* noted a disturbing pre-election development. Memphis for the second consecutive time was enjoying an over-large registration of voters. Negroes, particularly, were being registered in large numbers. Even the inmates of the county asylum for the mentally ill were herded into buses and taken to registration centers.<sup>51</sup> Again the Sunday closing laws were relaxed. Mooney wrote: "The outlook for an honest election is not good."<sup>52</sup>

On July 28, Crump announced his withdrawal as candidate for sheriff because of the legal difficulty of holding two offices. John R. Riechman, president of the Riechman-Crosby Company, one of the largest mill supply houses in the South, was to run as Crump's understudy.<sup>53</sup> But Riechman encountered difficulties. Judge Walter Malone of the Shelby County Circuit Court ruled that his name could not appear on the ballot because he had not met the legal time limit for the announcement of his candidacy.<sup>54</sup>

To circumvent this difficulty the Crump forces determined to elect him by a write-in vote. Such a procedure risked losing the favorable vote of eight thousand Negro registrants, since many of them would be unable to write a German name like Riechman. So "Crump's Boys turned pedagogue and unfolded

before a startled Memphis the slickest piece of adult education for the underprivileged in Southern history.”<sup>55</sup> On August 5, the *Commercial Appeal* reported that the Crump crowd was “conducting schools on Beale Street and seeking to teach a gin-drinking nigger enough to make a mark and write a name.” Beale Street was plastered with signs and banners, and trucks with Riechman’s name spelled in large letters slowly toured the Negro areas. “Later, slates and blackboards swung around necks appeared. On the streets everywhere, Negroes were practicing ‘Write it Rick’ with ward heelers standing by as teachers.”<sup>56</sup> The election was merely a formality. Crump men were victorious by heavy majorities. It was, wrote Mooney, “a thorough exhibition of the power and evils of machine politics in Memphis.”<sup>57</sup>

The opposition that gave temporary pause to Crump’s permanent ascendance in the politics of Memphis and Shelby County came only from a few of the people of Memphis, and mostly from the State of Tennessee. From the time of the passage of the state-wide prohibition law in 1909, Crump had shown a disdain for its enforcement in Memphis. Shortly after he took office, representatives of the Law Enforcement League, a group of citizens interested in having prohibition put into effect in the city, called on the new mayor to request that he enforce the law. Crump responded by telling the committee that he regarded cleaning up dives and ridding the city of thieves to be more important than the enforcement of the prohibition law. The people of Memphis, he said, did not want prohibition anyway.<sup>58</sup>

Crump’s refusal to enforce the law rankled prohibitionists in the city and was widely interpreted outside of Memphis as an affront to the State of Tennessee. It was inevitable that the enforcement of the state law be made an issue in the gubernatorial race of 1912. The blessing of Crump went to the Democratic nominee, Benton McMillen, when McMillen apparently



agreed not to make an issue of the enforcement of the prohibition law in Memphis. The Republicans nominated Ben W. Hooper, a somewhat colorless but honest politician from east Tennessee, who had been a frequent holder of minor offices in the state government. The campaign was heavily weighted with the issue of Crump versus the State of Tennessee. In Memphis Hooper gave his audience the same message that he was giving the people in other sections of the state: "When I am elected governor of Tennessee . . . I will with the help of an honest legislature and a good God, clean out every saloon and every low-down dive in Memphis."<sup>59</sup> In November Hooper won the victory, and it was probably the result of his stand on prohibition in Memphis with its implication of bringing Crump into line.

A year later Governor Hooper came to Memphis again, this time to address a mass meeting of ten thousand persons in the north Main Street Auditorium, assembled to protest the failure of prohibition in Memphis. Hooper placed the blame on Crump, but said that he was attempting to have laws enacted by the State Legislature designed to compel local authorities to enforce the state-wide law.<sup>60</sup>

On October 16, 1913, just a week after Hooper's Memphis appearance the State Legislature passed the enforcement acts to which the governor had alluded. The principal one, especially directed at the situation in Memphis, was called the "Nuisance Act." It provided for the suppression of saloons, houses of prostitution, and gambling establishments by injunction. After such an establishment was declared a nuisance by the attorney general, any of the judicial officials of a city or county, or by any ten freeholders, an injunction to secure its closure could be applied for to the state Chancery Circuit or the Criminal Courts.<sup>61</sup>

For the most part, the Nuisance Act did not accomplish the purpose intended by its framers. During the remainder of

1913 its application was held up by its being contested in the courts. But the courts sustained the law, and on March 1, 1914, after the failure of the final appeal, 576 saloons surrendered their retail liquor licenses.<sup>62</sup> This submission to the law was only superficial. Gradually, the "back door" trade began to flourish, and on March 30, the *Commercial Appeal* observed that "Few . . . bars are closed."

In May, the Anti-Saloon League wrote Crump a letter requesting that he state his position on the liquor issue. Crump evaded the question by charging that the letter was "politically inspired" and by indulging in personal criticism of the league's membership.<sup>63</sup> In August, Crump evinced a further disregard for the law by permitting the saloons to open publicly during the election campaign.

It was this problem of securing the cooperation of city officials that represented the principal concern of the State Legislature when it assembled in the spring of 1915. This time legislative action was directed at the officials rather than at the saloons. On January 29, Governor Tom C. Rye signed the epochal "Ouster Law."<sup>64</sup> The act provided that any person holding public office in Tennessee "who shall neglect to perform any duty enjoined upon such officer by any of the laws of the State of Tennessee . . . shall be ousted from such office."<sup>65</sup> As in the case of the Nuisance Act, a petition of complaint could be filed in a state court by any of the judicial officials of the state, county, or city.

The law went through the usual procedure of court testing and it was not until October that it could be applied to the situation in Memphis. On October 16, the *Commercial Appeal* reported with unfeigned joy that the "State of Tennessee through its attorney general . . . has come into the Chancery Court of Shelby County and demands that E. H. Crump, mayor, be ousted from office because . . . he has willfully failed to enforce the law."<sup>66</sup>

Two weeks later Crump called for an armistice. A delegation of Memphis businessmen went to Nashville for him, prepared to promise Governor Rye that the prohibition law would be enforced in Memphis if the state would drop ouster proceedings against Crump. Rye had only to point out that he had no authority to stop a judicial proceeding.<sup>67</sup>

In giving its evaluation of Crump's surrender offer, the *Commercial Appeal* said that the businessmen's delegation, instead of calling on the governor, should have called on Crump a year earlier and the difficulty would have been avoided. "The great trouble in this time, and that of the South, is that when it suits us we take the administration of the law into our own hands. . . . This liquor law was violated so long. . . that violation was accepted as a matter of course; and not until the wheels began actively to move . . . did a number of people in Memphis believe that they could move."<sup>68</sup>

The committee that had called on Governor Rye had scarcely returned to Memphis when the Chancery Court announced its decision that Crump could no longer hold office. The decision was immediately appealed to the State Supreme Court, and, as the public awaited the decision of that body, a new aspect of the problem was brought to light. In the spring of 1915, Crump had been overwhelmingly elected to a new term as mayor beginning January 1, 1916.<sup>69</sup> Could he be ousted from an office that he had not begun? It seemed that he could not be. On January 1, the day that Crump was to have been sworn in for his new term, the state Supreme Court, not having reached a decision on Crump's appeal, issued a stay order preventing him from taking office. On February 12, the Court found Crump guilty of the charges made against him in the ouster suit, but added that while he might take office, the evidence used against him in the original suit could be used in a second ouster petition.<sup>70</sup>

The mayor of Memphis had finally been cornered: Crump

could either resign or fight another ouster suit. He made no public statement of his intentions, but since the law required that he take office and file his mayor's bond within ten days after the legal beginning of his term, he was obliged to do so by midnight, February 22, or forfeit the office. On that date, a legal holiday, the city commissioners were mysteriously summoned to the residence of one of their members. There they found Crump and Vice-Mayor Utley. Crump took the oath of office, was handed a check for \$679.31 in back salary, and immediately resigned as mayor. Vice-Mayor Utley then took the oath of office as mayor, drew \$439.65, and resigned. Thereupon the commissioners elected Thomas C. Ashcroft as mayor. Ashcroft was a member of the commission and satisfactory to Crump.

The following day the *Commercial Appeal* revealed to the people the amazing sequence of events that had given them three mayors in one day. The reason for Crump's action, observed editor Mooney, was that "he could not stand the gaff of another ouster bill."<sup>71</sup>

The ousting of Crump did not, of course, terminate his public career. Six months after his resignation from the office of mayor he was elected triumphantly to the highly lucrative office of county trustee, a position he held for four terms. This period, wrote one commentator on Crump's career, "was clearly a transitional" one in his political life.<sup>72</sup> "Crump was becoming more than a successful candidate; he was becoming the recognized political leader of West Tennessee." People began to seek advice from him on a wide range of subjects. Particularly, his advice and approval was becoming necessary to local office seekers. In 1919, he endorsed Rowlett Paine for mayor, successfully asserting his control of city politics with a hand-picked candidate. By the twenties it was recognized that he was a permanent and absolutely controlling factor in the politics of Memphis and Shelby County.

There is nothing in Crump's political career after 1916 that alters the record he achieved as an outstanding progressive leader during the period of his mayoralty. By temperament Crump was a progressive in that he was not given to metaphysical speculation on the ultimate causes of problems touching on public welfare. He fell readily into the progressive habit of pointing his finger at the enemies of the "people"—usually in the form of a wickedly disposed utility corporation or a political opponent whose allegiance was primarily to the devil. These were Crump's personal devils; at least, they were made to appear so to the public, for Crump, the perceptive psychologist, was keenly aware of the public's need to have its sense of indignation against unrighteousness given some form of personalization. Crump's real devils were inefficiency and waste, and the war he waged against them was ruthless. He espoused commission government because it was efficient, and after it was secured he forced efficiency into all branches of city administration. The effects of this were especially notable in the fire and police departments and in the health department.

Efficiency made for a lower tax rate, which was the proudest boast of the Crump administration. But lower taxes also came as a consequent of tax reform that caused assessments on both private and corporate property to be made on the basis of actual value. Here Crump showed none of the respect for special privilege, either to individuals or corporations, that his predecessors had. Because special privilege in a few instances had been abolished, business generally supported Crump.

Crump was responsive to the humanitarianism of progressivism. Although the groundwork had been laid by others, the Crump administration gave wholehearted support to the Juvenile Court, which is not surprising, since Crump himself took the lead in having the city charter amended to provide for the court. Playgrounds were added to parks and supervised recreation for children provided for, although here again the laborious



Main and Madison, 1912



Sam Carnes

work of creating a public opinion favorable toward these things had been done by others. Medical care for the poor received city support in the visiting nurse program, and infants of poor parents were provided with free milk.

But at what cost? In the fall of 1915 as Crump's ouster suit was making its way through the courts, editor Mooney of the *Commercial Appeal* attempted an appraisal. "The government of Memphis," he wrote, "has grown into a well organized despotism." Its organization had been carried out ruthlessly. "Men who opposed it were quickly thrown out of office. And that is not all. They were persecuted after they were out of the city's service."<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, ventured Mooney, "No one can deny that there has been a tremendous improvement in streets, in fire protection and in many other things that go to make for the material welfare of a city."

Mooney might have left the equation of good and bad at this point of balance without going on to see the bad exclusively in the person of Crump. In the light of Memphis' history since the yellow fever epidemic of 1879, the issue was not too complex. If Memphis was to have order, it would have to be an imposed order. As Crump himself figured in the equation, Mooney might have been thankful that the cost of order, and what the period called progress, was no higher than it was. Unlike some other figures prominent in Southern politics, Crump had not entrenched himself in office through a demagogic use of the issues of either race or religion. Mooney might have noted, too, that Crump had used few means to attain his ends that were not common to the practice of politicians generally. And he had used these generally tolerated means with much greater effectiveness. The problem, after all, was Memphis—its people and its past.<sup>74</sup>



## CHAPTER TEN

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### *On the Eve of the War*

**I**N 1917 the United States entered the first World War, and the progressive era came to an end. The era had brought changes to Memphis, but not all of them were progressive, and in some ways Memphis had changed hardly at all.

Between 1900 and 1917 Memphis had grown in size, but not so greatly as its boosters—who believed size was a measure of progress—had hoped. When the city entered the new century with a population of over a hundred thousand, it was confidently predicted that by 1919 this figure would be doubled.<sup>1</sup> But in 1907 the United States Census Bureau estimated the city's population to be only 125,000, whereupon the *Commercial Appeal* protested that this was "ridiculous and absurd."<sup>2</sup> The disillusionment was deeper in 1910 when the census gave Memphis only 131,105 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In 1915 the figure had risen only to 148,995 and in 1920, only to 162,350, well below the two hundred thousand goal.<sup>4</sup>

The census was disappointing in other ways. Among Southern cities Memphis had been exceeded in its 1900 population only by New Orleans and St. Louis. In 1910 it lagged behind not only these two cities, but behind Birmingham and Atlanta

as well.<sup>5</sup> In the decade of 1890-1900 Memphis had enjoyed a 58.6 per cent increase in population, while the percentage increase for Atlanta and Birmingham had been 37.1 and 46.7 respectively. From 1900 to 1910 the city's percentage rate of increase had dropped to 28.1, while Birmingham's, reflecting the steel boom, had risen phenomenally to 245.4, and Atlanta's to 72.3.<sup>6</sup>

The retarded rate of population increase, which continued until the twenties, was not necessarily a misfortune. With an ebb in the tide of rural immigrants, a proportionately larger part of the city's population was more experienced in urban living and this gave the city's life a more settled character. At least, by 1917 one does not find press accounts of widespread raucous behavior at the Christmas season or of the continued prevalence of pistol carrying. It is likely the *Commercial Appeal* had something like this in mind when it commented in 1910 that "There was a time in the history of Memphis when the city was distinctively Southern," but now it is "a cosmopolitan city."<sup>7</sup> Another commentator noted that Memphis was changing. In 1914 an Irish traveler observed that "Memphis . . . seems to be emerging rapidly from the ruins of one civilization and going boldly forward to take its place in another."<sup>8</sup>

More obvious was the change in the city's physical appearance. The Memphis skyline in 1900 had been punctuated by only one tall building and an occasional church spire, but by 1916 even the church spires were dwarfed by a number of imposing skyscrapers. The year 1906 saw the completion of two structures, each fifteen stories high, the Memphis Trust Company Building and the Tennessee Trust Company Building. Four years later, the Exchange Building, nineteen stories high, was completed on one corner of Second Street and Madison Avenue, while on the opposite corner the Central Bank and Trust Company rose eighteen stories high. Construction work was begun in the summer of 1914 on a twenty-story building

at Main Street and Union Avenue for the Commercial Trust and Savings Bank.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to office buildings Memphis acquired two other imposing commercial structures. In 1913 the million-dollar, thirteen-story Hotel Chisca was completed on the site of the old Bijou Theatre at the corner of Main and Linden streets. The year before, a new Union Depot, an ornate structure with two sweeping flights of stairs ascending from the street to the main lobby, had been opened on Calhoun Street, and in 1914, several railroads that had withdrawn from the Union Station plan opened the architecturally more sedate Central Station on Main at Calhoun Street.<sup>10</sup>

As towering new structures were raised in the city's business district, old landmarks were sacrificed to the demands of progress. In 1911 the old City Fire Hall, erected in 1857 on Adams and Second streets, was razed. Leuhrman's famous hotel and restaurant on Main Street was put up for auction in 1909. It, as much as any other institution in Memphis, was associated with the past. As the *Commercial Appeal* noted at the time of its sale, its going marked the end of an era—a day “before the lid was known, before the grasp of the political reformer was felt and before the mania of prohibition crazed the land.”<sup>11</sup> The paper concluded regretfully: “There will never be another Luehrman's.” And in 1915 another major tie to past conviviality and good living was removed when Gaston's hotel and restaurant at 33–35 Court Street was demolished to make room for the Turley Building.<sup>12</sup> In 1911 the *Commercial Appeal* nostalgically noted the “Passing of Landmarks”: “Where the meadow lands stood when we were children now subdivisions stand adorned with splendid houses. The old path along the roadside has been covered with granolith. . . . The City may have reached out . . . but as we walk along memory carries us back, and for the time being we live happily in the vanished land of recollection and recall the joys of our youth.”<sup>13</sup>

Few in Memphis lamented long the passing of old ways or old scenes, for the years of the new century brought exciting new interests. None was more lively than the automobile. In 1910 the city had approximately one thousand machines, a number that increased to 6,700 by December, 1913—four times as many as were being driven in New Orleans, so the *Commercial Appeal* claimed.<sup>14</sup> The Sunday *Commercial Appeal* devoted one full page to automobile news, advising owners on the care of their cars. Women's fashion notes contained advice on "The New Automobile Clothes," recommending the "new adjustable auto bonnet which may be worn with a veil of any color and shade desired."<sup>15</sup> Beginning in 1911 annual automobile shows were held in the Auditorium on north Main Street, and they became events of major social importance. Until 1908 the average automobile, whether electric or motor driven, cost between \$1,000 and \$2,000. After 1908 the people of Memphis could buy Henry Ford's Model T touring car, with a four-cylinder, twenty-horsepower engine and equipped with three oil lamps and a tube horn, for \$850.

Interest in the automobile was heightened by races and endurance contests. Beginning in 1908 the Memphis Automobile Dealers Association staged an annual road endurance contest over one hundred miles in length. That year's contest featured twenty-seven cars, including a Cadillac, a Reo, a White Steamer, a Premier, a Rambler, and a Stoddard-Dayton.<sup>16</sup> Races were held annually at the Tri-State Fair, the 1912 one being of particular interest, since it included a local entry, Fred Orgill's specially constructed Studebaker-Garford.<sup>17</sup>

The automobile exacted its price. In order to have cars many people departed from the virtuous practice of buying only what they could pay for and burdened themselves with debt. Providing, as it did, a greatly increased mobility, the automobile inevitably threatened the stability of the family. Life became more complex as its tempo quickened. The *Commercial Appeal*

said that many persons had mortgaged their homes for cars; that automobiles required that "the man in average station must be supremely busy every moment of the day in order to meet the expenses incident to the complex mode of living," and that the time a man once devoted to his wife and children "is now given to tearing over the country in an automobile."<sup>18</sup>

The airplane was still a novelty. It was evaluated cautiously, as had been the automobile several years previously. "Is there any sound sense in aerial navigation?" asked the *Commercial Appeal* in 1906. "Will it add anything whatever to the happiness of mankind? All these questions we do not hesitate to answer in the negative. We were made to live on the earth, and not to sail in the skies."<sup>19</sup> Four years later the paper aligned itself with progress. When René Barrier flew over Memphis in a Bleriot monoplane he received a \$5,000 prize from the *Commercial Appeal* for having made the first flight over the city.<sup>20</sup>

The quickening pace of life had its corollary in changing customs and modes of behavior—changes that some thought were for the worse. One such change was the increase in freedom for women, the more noticeable because it departed so conspicuously from the values of the Old South where women were concerned. When a few women began to smoke publicly, the *Commercial Appeal* commented that "when a woman starts out to make a fool of herself she usually goes the limit."<sup>21</sup> By many of the older generation the new assertiveness of women was deplored. The Reverend William T. Bolling, a veteran of the Civil War, recorded his distaste for the new ways in his "Reflections" which he wrote weekly for the Sunday *Commercial Appeal*.

The women of the old South were the finest women in the world, but we will never see their like again, for the conditions which made such a womanhood possible have passed from the South for all time. . . . A body of women entering into the degrading push and pull of politics is to former associates of the gentle, refined and cultured women of the old

South simply disgusting, and reveals a mournful decadence of the refinement of the home and the social life, on which so much of the future of civilization depends.<sup>22</sup>

There were other developments disquieting to those who cherished the image of woman created by the Old South. In 1909 the Lyceum Theatre ran "The Blue Mouse," a play that the *Commercial Appeal* charged with being flagrantly indecent. To the defense offered by the producers that it was really "art," the paper replied that it was "as artistic as the nude painting that decorates the wall of a gin mill on the first floor of a panel house."<sup>23</sup> The newspaper especially objected to the way a woman exploited her beauty and suggested "the respectability of pandering and procuring" which was "a sacrilege to beauty." Such conduct confined to the tenderloin was accepted, but outside it was a sordid degradation of the womanly ideal. On the day the play opened, theater-goers were urged to "Feed the Blue Mouse to the Cats Today."<sup>24</sup> The appeal for a boycott merely served to excite the public's interest. The day after the closing of the production the paper reported that "'The Blue Mouse' concluded last night one of the most successful financial theatrical engagements of the present season. Four performances found the Lyceum Theatre crowded to the limits of the gallery. Men, women, girls and boys gathered, some of whom leaned and listened, for fear of missing some salacious bit of dialogue."<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, traditional tastes were offended by new trends in music and dancing. The *Commercial Appeal* noted disapprovingly that "a favored air in the park . . . concerts . . . was Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song' played in rag-time," and that the latest popular song was "a story of Mrs. Casey Jones's second marriage and her divorce."<sup>26</sup> "When we listen back into the days of a generation ago," wrote the editor, "and recall the vogue of 'Nellie Gray,' 'My Old Kentucky Home,' 'Grandfather's Clock,' 'Old Dog Tray' and the melodies of that gen-

eration, we cannot but feel a regret that that age has drifted into its present tawdry condition.”<sup>27</sup>

Ragtime dancing reached rage proportions with the city's white society in 1912, when everyone began doing new types of dance steps, the “Grizzly Bear” and the “Turkey Trot.” Perhaps forgetting that this kind of dancing and music had its origins among the Negroes of Memphis and New Orleans, the *Commercial Appeal* professed to believe that it had come “from the dance halls of the red light district of San Francisco” and that it should be “quarantined” as it approached Memphis.<sup>28</sup> But soon ragtime became popular in the clubs, and out at East End Park the most popular attraction was a vaudeville bill featuring Ray Samuels, “the blue streak of ragtime.”<sup>29</sup>

The *Commercial Appeal's* view that “modern trends” represented changes for the worse suggests changing values rather than an actual moral decline. In its treatment of prostitution and dives, which were long standing evils in Memphis, the paper was almost tolerant—as it was almost intolerant of the city's reformers of the progressive era who avowed to abolish these evils. Prostitution and dives were necessary features of a man's world, the kind of world that the Old South believed in. In a way, they were even good, because they permitted man to be what he was without his having to desecrate the ideal he had framed for those Southern women who laid a claim to respect. The real objection that the *Commercial Appeal*, and probably many respectable people, had to new forms of entertainment was that they placed women in a role that conflicted with the old ideal.<sup>30</sup>

But the fact of change, so prominent in the twentieth century, had to be reckoned with in issues much larger than this Old South ideal. The first decade of the twentieth century was throughout the Western World a period of high optimism, a period where faith in an imminent social perfectibility was scarcely challenged. In the second decade the first World War

profoundly shook this faith and in America brought to a halt the progressive movement, the course that America had chosen to a better society. This change was dramatically registered in Memphis.

On June 22, 1914, the *Commercial Appeal* reported the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. A brief editorial on the subject passed it off as just another case of royalty's being assassinated, but stated that grave consequences could ensue. Other matters were more immediately pressing. For one thing, it was hot: June, 1914, had been the hottest and driest June in the history of the city.<sup>31</sup> It was hot politically, too, with the Crump forces registering thousands of Negroes in preparation for the fall election. And the city was still engrossed in the great Hunter Raine bank scandal.<sup>32</sup>

The beginning of the conflict was greeted with exclamations of dismay from the press, but within three weeks the people of Memphis were settling back as observers to choose between the devils and the heroes in the struggle. Economically, the period of adjustment was more protracted. By September it was apparent that the war was going to interfere seriously with the movement of the cotton crop, and a "buy-a-bale" campaign was launched to take cotton that could not be sold off the market. Anyone who could, was urged to buy a bale of cotton and to hold it until some future time when increasing demand would bring higher prices.<sup>33</sup> In December, unemployment was becoming noticeable. At a mass meeting of the Socialists and the unemployed a resolution was adopted calling on the federal government to begin a program of public works.<sup>34</sup> By the summer of 1915 an economic adjustment to the war had been made and unemployment ceased to be a problem.

With the European conflict settling into a war of attrition and the United States choosing a policy of firm neutrality, time was provided to continue the work of reform. Possibly as a result of the high moral tone that the war and its exalted aims



engendered, this later phase of the progressive movement in Memphis encouraged dramatic and sweeping reform gestures. Reacting sharply to the prohibitionists' anger at the Crump administration's unwillingness to take decisive action against the open sale of liquor, Mayor Thomas Ashcroft, who succeeded Crump in January, 1916, made what appeared to be a more determined effort to stop it. Although the saloon had ceased to be an open institution by 1916, one could easily buy liquor in pool rooms, cigar stores, and "literary and social clubs." Organizing a special squad of "rum raiders," the Ashcroft administration systematically raided these sources of supply. In November, 1916, nineteen indictments were brought against the operators of the social clubs, and numerous arrests by police and sheriff's officers followed.<sup>35</sup> As a result of these efforts, the illegal sale of liquor was severely limited by early 1917.

Even prostitution, the most tolerated of the city's social evils, was attacked. In the summer of 1917 Police Chief William J. Hayes ordered all brothels closed. Enforcing his order with a strict patrol of the restricted area, Hayes unwittingly created a new social problem—the vocational rehabilitation of several hundred members of the profession.<sup>36</sup> A committee sponsored by the Protestant Pastors' Association raised a fund for their relief, and many were provided transportation to other cities or rehabilitated and placed in other occupations.<sup>37</sup>

The crusade for purity reached its climax in the summer of 1917. Then it was quickly forgotten as crusading zeal was channeled into a more momentous issue, that of meeting the threat of German militarism. During the first month of the war the Memphis press had affected neutrality, but by the end of August, 1914, the *Commercial Appeal* was adopting a pro-Ally tone. "There was," declared the paper, "no excuse for the German invasion of Belgium."<sup>38</sup> Bishop Thomas Gailor, Memphis' distinguished Episcopal clergyman, publicly expressed his conviction that German militarism had caused the war.<sup>39</sup>

By the fall of 1915 Germany's guilt had been established to the satisfaction of most, and public leaders began to do their part to awaken the nation to its need for preparedness. C. P. J. Mooney, editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, and Luke E. Wright, who once had been minister to Japan and a Philippine commissioner, called for a strong army and navy, Mooney hammering his plea into the minds of the people of Memphis "until even the local socialist party resolved to favor preparedness."<sup>40</sup> Helping the local advocates of preparedness were National Security League propagandists. One of these, Eric Wood, addressed a preparedness group at the Goodwyn Institute on May 29, 1916. "The weakness and vacillation which we have displayed in the last two years have made us frankly despised by all the virile nations of the world," he said.<sup>41</sup> "Our nation is at present foredoomed to irretrievable disaster in its next war," he gloomily predicted, its most dangerous enemies being "not the trained . . . veterans of our next antagonist but the unpractical theorists, anti-preparationists and the legislative vacillators."

As proof of its virile Americanism Memphis, like other American cities, staged a preparedness parade. A committee named to organize it declared that any physically able man in Memphis who did not participate would be a "slacker hiding behind the skirts of the women lining the parade's route."<sup>42</sup> When it was held, the 20,000 men who marched required one hour and eight minutes to pass the corner of Main and Madison.

With the announcement in February, 1917, that Wilson had broken diplomatic relations with Germany, "a tremendous wave of patriotism rolled through the city as . . . everywhere the action . . . was endorsed."<sup>43</sup> Then on April 2, Wilson asked for war. "It will be for us," wrote Mooney in the *Commercial Appeal*, "a just war, and, God helping us, we will win and set the world free."<sup>44</sup> The people of Memphis, he declared,

"should . . . fight . . . and die for the triumph of the cause of human liberty, the equal rights of men under the law, and the equal rights of nations."

The war declaration brought the progressive era to a close in Memphis. When that era began in 1900, Memphis had been a confused city, suffering from the growing pains of its increased size and industrialization. At the end of the era in 1917, it was clear that the spirit of progressive reform had helped clear away some of the confusion and had eased some of the growing pains.

Progressivism had brought Memphis better water and sewage systems, better streets, better fire and police protection and a handsome network of parks and playgrounds. It had reformed the courts and penal institutions, improved the school system and laid the foundations for an effective public health program. The city government had stood up to the corporations and had brought a measure of order to the city's economic life. Through the establishment of a commission form of government the city had achieved a more mature political leadership and a more efficient administration. Existing institutions had been reorganized and new ones developed to deal more effectively with many of the social problems of the times.

But the failures of the progressive movement in Memphis were as apparent as its successes. Public health was far from achieved. The saloons and prostitution had been only spasmodically curbed. Violence and lawlessness persisted—the murder rate rising to a peak in 1916—as evidence that the social disorganization of the city was by no means straightened out. The Negro was actually little better off than he had been in 1900. And in spite of governmental reforms the city had not ended bossism—a feat that could have been done only through the growth of a critically minded self-informing electorate.

The movement in Memphis—and this was true of progressivism generally—had been largely a reorganization of

externals, a pragmatic social patching. In keeping with its pragmatic character, it possessed no unifying philosophy. Progressivism never bothered much with defining the basic values out of which the reform movement developed, and it is this fact that accounts for its lack of penetration and its inconsistencies. As one American thinker, who subsequently expressed disillusionment with progressivism and its pragmatic philosophy explained it, "we had our private utopias."<sup>45</sup> And, he continued, there was always the problem of "just how values were created, and it became easier and easier to assume that just any growth was justified and almost any activity valuable so long as it achieved its ends." The American reformer, he said, "habitually confused results with product," and was "content with getting somewhere without asking too closely whether it was the desirable place to get."

While the reformers looked to the achievement of their "private utopias," they did possess a common underlying set of beliefs out of which the vision of their utopias emerged. Most Memphians, and most Americans, who espoused reform did so out of their Judaic-Christian convictions. But they failed to carry out their convictions comprehensively or systematically enough in their social action. In Memphis too much piety was burned out at revival meetings, of both the religious and political kind, and in declarations of noble aims. The progressives wanted to humanize the life of the city, but they notably failed to increase the humanity of the whites to the colored people, and, indeed, of whites to whites.

Their failure was tragically demonstrated by an incident, which can be taken, along with the war, as marking the end of the progressive era in Memphis. It illustrated how shallow progress had been.

The incident occurred in May, 1917, when a sixteen-year-old white girl was raped and then decapitated.<sup>46</sup> The crime was committed in the Wolf River bottoms near Macon Road,

about five miles from what was then the city limits. Macon Road was roughly an east-west extension of Jackson Avenue from the northeastern corner of the city.

Suspicion was directed at a half-witted Negro, named Eli Persons, who was apprehended and taken to Nashville and jailed there for safekeeping. On Saturday, May 19, Sheriff Mike Tate of Shelby County ordered Persons returned to Memphis to stand trial the following Friday in the Criminal Court. On Sunday evening rumors began to circulate that with the opening of court action would take place on Person's case. It was reported that the Court had made a number of attempts to appoint a lawyer to defend Persons, but none could be found who was willing to take the case.

By early Monday morning "hundreds of automobiles" loaded with armed men, recruited largely from the Macon Road community, began barricading the roads leading into the city. All trains, even the Illinois Central from the North, were stopped and searched. A score or more automobiles carrying approximately a hundred men headed for Holly Springs to intercept the Frisco train from Nashville. Fearing trouble at Holly Springs, the deputies charged with returning Persons to Memphis took him from the train at Potts Camp, a small community on the Frisco line to the south of Holly Springs. When the mob at Holly Springs heard of what had been done, it hastened to Potts Camp where the local constable surrendered Persons without a protest. The Negro was placed in one of the fastest automobiles, and the return trip to Memphis was begun.

In the meantime automobiles began to arrive throughout the day on Monday at the Wolf River bridge on Macon Road near the spot where the crime had been committed. By night a crowd estimated at upwards of four thousand people had gathered. "Fully 500 cars" from Memphis were parked on each side of Macon Road for a mile or more. A "long lank country-

man," flourishing a pistol in one hand and a lantern in the other, supervised the parking. He ordered the cars off the road and threatened to "shoot them in line" if they did not obey. As the night wore on many descended the embankment and went into the bottoms that bordered the river to build a fire. By seven o'clock Tuesday morning the crowd had grown still larger. The morning *Commercial Appeal* carried a front page story of the events taking place and predicted an early lynching.

An indication that the drama was about to reach its climax occurred at eight o'clock Tuesday morning when a Ford, driven at a "furious speed," was seen approaching. After careening recklessly back and forth before the crowd, the driver turned his machine down the steep embankment, ran through a barbed-wire fence, and ripped through the underbrush into the bottoms. Stopping his car under a spruce tree, he took out a rope and attached it to a limb and began to dig a hole in the ground beneath.

At nine o'clock the mother of the murdered girl was brought on the scene, and a minute or two later the automobile bearing Persons arrived at the bridge. One of the men who accompanied the Negro raised his hand for silence and indicated that the mother was to speak. "I want to thank all my friends who have worked so hard in my behalf," she said. "Let the negro suffer as my little girl suffered, only 10 times worse." "Burn him," the crowd cried. "Yes, burn him on the spot where he killed my little girl," she said. So they decided against hanging.

But one of the leaders objected to the suggested location because all would not be able to see. Persons was then taken from the car, informed that he was about to die, and asked if he wanted to confess. What he said, only a few heard, for he was so frightened that he could only whisper, but it was said that he confessed the crime. As the mob of men, women, and children jeered, he was taken down the embankment and chained, where all could see, to a huge log where brush was

piled about him. In the midst of the surging, milling crowd, a large man named "Brother Royal," a leader of a rural religious sect, held up his hands for attention. "It has been suggested that prayer be offered," he said, "but I am opposed to that for he didn't give the little lady an opportunity for prayer." So Persons, without a prayer, suffered the flames and while the mob shrieked he remained silent.

Later, when the fire had died, members of the mob cut the heart from the body and dismembered the charred remains. On Beale Street the head and a leg were thrown among a group of Negroes, and a barber shop, seeking to attract customers, displayed a charred remnant.

There was little protest. The *Commercial Appeal* ran a brief editorial condemning the lawlessness of the action. One group, the Poplar Avenue Jewish Temple congregation, protested the crime, and on May 25, three days after the affair, members of the clergy of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths issued a statement to the public. "We clergymen of the city of Memphis . . . confess our dereliction of duty in not having warned an inflamed public opinion against mob violence when it was apparent to every reader of newspapers that preparations had been made for lynching." These were the only admissions recorded in the press that a monstrous violation of justice had occurred with the full knowledge of the public.

As quickly as this violent pursuit of one "devil" had begun, it was over and forgotten, and Memphis turned its righteous anger against another devil, the German nation. The day after the burning, the *Commercial Appeal* ran a double column editorial pointing out the financial advantages of investing in Liberty Bonds. On Thursday, the day before Persons was supposed to have been tried, Luke E. Wright addressed a bond rally and defined the great issue facing the people of Memphis. It was, said Wright, "whether the Germanic powers should trample upon and fling to the winds the rules of international

law. . . . We could not, with honor and self respect, let the hands of civilization be set back a hundred years." Another speaker said, "Germany is the Judas among the nations of the earth." <sup>47</sup>

Memphis was still chasing devils in the easy way of the progressive movement, blind to the devil in its own heart.



# Notes

## CHAPTER ONE

1. See also U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Population* (Washington, 1901), 1:lxix.
2. *Twelfth Census, Population*, 1:lxix-lxx. The percentage increase in population during this decade for Jacksonville, Birmingham, and Atlanta was 65.3, 46.7, 37.1, respectively.
3. For a discussion of the prevailing American outlook at the turn of the century, see Lloyd Morris, *Postscript to Yesterday, America: the Last Fifty Years* (New York, 1947), xl.
4. *Evening Scimitar*, September 27, 1900.
5. See Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, 1938), 6-7.
6. *The Biography of a River Town* (Chapel Hill, 1939), 162.
7. *Ibid.*, 163.
8. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, Statistics of Population* (Washington, 1872), 1:268.
9. J. P. Young, *Standard History of Memphis, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1912), 141.
10. *Ibid.*, 131.
11. Some remained voluntarily to perform what in many instances were heroic services, and a number became martyrs in the cause of the city's future.
12. The Germans of Memphis continued to celebrate their *Maifest* every year until the first World War. In 1901 the German *Turn Verein* performed in a demonstration of group gymnastics for the Confederate Veterans' Reunion. German names likewise were conspicuous among the membership of the city's musical organizations.
13. Sterling Tracy, "The Immigrant Population of Memphis," in *The West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, 4:75 (Memphis, 1950).
14. *Ibid.*, 77; *Twelfth Census, Population*, 1:cxxi.
15. This estimate is made on the basis of the fact that the population of Memphis, which in 1880 was 33,592, increased by some sixty-eight

thousand by 1900. The natural increase in population through an excess of births over deaths would have brought the 1900 population to hardly more than forty-five thousand. This would leave over fifty thousand to be accounted for by immigration. Fifty thousand, however, would seem to be a much too conservative estimate on the basis of evidence uncovered by Gerald Capers (*River Town*, 205). Capers writes that the "amazing extent to which newcomers took the places of former residents in the years following 1880 is revealed in a census taken in 1918 by the National Bureau of Education. Of the 11,781 white parents residing in Memphis forty years after the great epidemic, only 183, less than 2 per cent, had been born there."

- A majority of the immigrants during this era apparently came from the western counties of Tennessee. The state making the next greatest contribution was Mississippi with over fourteen thousand, followed by Alabama with four thousand (*Twelfth Census, Population*, 1:710-713).
16. This point is based on the concepts developed by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*.
  17. *Commercial Appeal*, November 3, 1907.
  18. *Ibid.*, September 13, 1904, September 6, 1908.
  19. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1914.
  20. *News Scimitar*, January 10, 1913.
  21. Interview with Abe D. Waldauer, November 22, 1952. In a somewhat later period Waldauer himself was an active member of the Single Tax Association.
  22. The *Commercial Appeal* is a major source for this history. Mooney came to the paper as managing editor in 1896 to take the position vacated by Edward W. Carmack. While Carmack was making a brilliant career in Tennessee politics, Mooney built the *Commercial Appeal* into the largest newspaper in the South. He left in 1902 to become affiliated with a Hearst newspaper, but returned in 1908, and for the next eighteen years, until his death in 1926, "the story of the Commercial Appeal was largely the story of C. P. J. Mooney." Robert Talley, *One Hundred Years of the Commercial Appeal, The Story of the Greatest Romance in American Journalism, 1840 to 1940* (Memphis, 1940), 62.
  23. *Commercial Appeal*, September 11, 1911.
  24. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1911, November 1, October 1, 1903.
  25. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1911.
  26. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1902.
  27. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1903.
  28. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1904.
  29. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1908.
  30. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1912.
  31. *Ibid.*, November 6, 1912.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. The relatively restricted area of the business district of 1900, as compared with its present day limits, is illustrated by the fact that Colonel Napoleon Hill, prince of cotton factors, still resided in the family mansion on Third Street, today the site of the Sterick Building.
2. Quoted in the *Commercial Appeal*, May 3, 1905.
3. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1901.
4. J. Horace McFarland, "Eyesores that Spoil Memphis," in *Ladies Home Journal*, 23:29 (June, 1906).
5. *Commercial Appeal*, June 14, 1906.
6. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1909. Nicholson pavement was a street surfacing material of specially treated wooden blocks. It replaced the gravel streets of the business district in the fall of 1867. Nicholson pavement came to be a symbol of civic wastefulness during the Reconstruction period, since the blocks began to rot within a few years and their initial expense contributed considerably to the city's indebtedness.
7. Interview with A. R. Davant, Sr., August 11, 1951.
8. *Commercial Appeal*, August 22, 1909.
9. Interview with A. R. Davant, Sr., August 11, 1951.
10. *Commercial Appeal*, June 27, 1909.
11. Andrew Morrison, *Memphis, the Bluff City* (Memphis, 1892), 9.
12. *Commercial Appeal*, October 15, 1903.
13. Morrison, *Memphis, the Bluff City*, 9.
14. Capers, *River Town*, 206-207.
15. *Commercial Appeal*, December 12, 1908.
16. *Ibid.*, August 10, 1901.
17. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1900.
18. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1904.
19. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1904.
20. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1904.
21. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1901.
22. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1901.
23. Interview with Sterling Tracy, August 20, 1950.
24. *Evening Scimitar*, October 30, 1902.
25. *Commercial Appeal*, November 1, 1902.
26. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1902.
27. *Ibid.*, editorial, September 13, 1901.
28. *Ibid.*, see editorial, June 11, 1900.
29. W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941), 86.
30. Interview with Sterling Tracy, August 20, 1951. Dr. Tracy wrote for the *Commercial Appeal* at a somewhat later period.
31. *Commercial Appeal*, October 2, 1898.

32. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1902. Out of charity to Connelly, this editorial must be judged in the light of two considerations: first, Connelly had a strong strain of Irish sentimentality; second, he was a frequent habitué of Luehrman's Restaurant, whose wine doubtless induced some of his compositions.
33. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1902.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, May 26, 1898.
36. H. C. Brearley, "The Pattern of Violence," in W. T. Couch, ed., *Culture in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1934), 686.
37. See *Commercial Appeal*, October 23, 1901, May 29, 1902.
38. Brearley, "The Pattern of Violence," 687.
39. *Commercial Appeal*, June 7, 1904.
40. Interview with A. R. Davant, Sr., August 11, 1951.
41. *Commercial Appeal*, September 27, 1901.
42. Quoted in *Commercial Appeal*, May 3, 1905.
43. *Ibid.*, February 15, 1899.
44. See Susan Dabney Smedes, *A Southern Planter* (New York, 1899), 160-162.
45. *Commercial Appeal*, December 26, 1900.
46. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1905.
47. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1912.
48. Cash, *Mind of the South*, 131.
49. According to the *Commercial Appeal*, April 10, 1902, Memphis had in that year 104 places of worship, fifty-two white and forty-two Negro. Of the white Protestant denominations, fourteen were Presbyterian, ten were Methodist, and six were Baptist. There were one Unitarian church and five Episcopal churches. The Jewish faith was represented by two congregations, while the Catholics of Memphis were distributed among six parishes.
50. *Commercial Appeal*, April 20, 1905.
51. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1907.
52. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1903.
53. *Ibid.*, August 7, 1901.
54. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1903.
55. See Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia, 1948), Chapter 9.
56. Ralph Henry Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought* (New York, 1940), 342.
57. *Commercial Appeal*, June 4, 1898.
58. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1898.
59. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1898.
60. *Ibid.*, August 7, 1898.

61. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1899.
62. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1901.
63. *Evening Scimitar*, July 12, 1900.
64. *Commercial Appeal*, August 22, 1900.
65. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1904. Bryan received 3,160 votes to McKinley's 1,718. In the election of 1904 Theodore Roosevelt received only 1,552 votes, while the Democratic candidate, Alton B. Parker, received 6,265.
66. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1900.
67. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1900.
68. After the battle of Santiago, Admiral Sampson, in command of the fleet, made some charges about Schley's conduct of the battle that reflected on Schley's ability.
69. *Commercial Appeal*, April 2, 1902.
70. One of the largest donations to the veterans' entertainment fund was a contribution of \$1,000 from Robert T. Church, a Negro born in slavery near Holly Springs, Mississippi.
71. *Commercial Appeal*, April 22, 1901.
72. The entire account of preparations for the reunion has been taken from the *Commercial Appeal*, April 22, 1901.
73. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1901.
74. *Evening Scimitar*, May 30, 1901.
75. *Commercial Appeal*, April 22, 1901.
76. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1909.
77. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1901. The emphasis on the theme of sectional reconciliation that was displayed at the banquet apparently distressed the *Commercial Appeal*, for two days after the banquet it quoted the *Washington Post's* comment that "Sensible men have been distressed and irritated long enough by the maudlin love feasts and hysterical outcries over what is called the 'reconciliation of the sections.'" The *Post* complimented Tennessee's Senator Edward W. Carmack for his dignified treatment of the subject at the McKinley banquet.
78. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1902. The reference was to Tennessee's notable orator, fiddle player, and one-time governor, Bob Taylor.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, September 10, 1900.
81. *Ibid.*, February 1, 1898.
82. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1903.
83. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1902.
84. Morris, *Postscript to Yesterday*, xviii.
85. Interview with A. R. Davant, Sr., August 11, 1951.
86. *Commercial Appeal*, February 2, 1902.
87. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1898.
88. *Ibid.*, February 12, 1899.

89. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1903.
90. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1898.
91. See Mark Sullivan, *Our Times, the Turn of the Century*, 1:487, 492-493 (New York, 1937).
92. *Commercial Appeal*, February 12, 1900.
93. Interview with Mrs. George Livermore, daughter of Carnes, July 12, 1951.
94. *Commercial Appeal*, August 27, 1902.
95. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1903.
96. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1903.
97. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1903. Supposedly the fastest automobile in Memphis during this period was owned by "Bub" May, a well-known horseman who wintered in Memphis. May's machine on one occasion was supposed to have reached a speed "reckoned at 75 miles per hour" on Monroe Avenue; *Commercial Appeal*, December 31, 1903. The report must have been the result of enthusiasm or inexperience on the part of those doing the reckoning since the world's record in 1903 was slightly less than sixty miles per hour.
98. H. Douglass Hughey, comp., *A Digest of the Laws, Ordinances, and Contracts of the City of Memphis* (Memphis, 1909), 475.
99. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 476.
100. *Commercial Appeal*, June 16, 1905.
101. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1902.

### CHAPTER THREE

1. *Commercial Appeal*, February 19, 1909.
2. Francis Butler Simkins, *The South Old and New* (New York, 1947), 231.
3. Victor S. Clark, "Modern Manufacturing Developments in the South, 1880-1905," in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, 4:264 (Richmond, 1909).
4. *Commercial Appeal*, April 30, 1911.
5. Capers, *River Town*, 208.
6. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Report on Manufacturing Industries in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, 1895), vol. 2, part 2, p. 4.
7. *Ibid.*, 3-5.
8. *Ibid.*
9. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900, Manufactures* (Washington, 1902), vol. 8, part 2, p. 848.
10. *Commercial Appeal*, December 28, 1903.

11. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Manufactures, 1909* (Washington, 1912), 9:1179, 1189; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Manufactures, 1919* (Washington, 1923), 9:1442-1443.
12. Chamber of Commerce, *Some Economic Factors in the Growth of Memphis, Tennessee* (Memphis, 1949).
13. In 1896 \$436,594 had been spent in building construction, while two years later \$553,263 was spent, and in 1899, over \$1,000,000. In the first fifteen years of the century construction amounted to between \$6,000,000 and \$7,000,000 a year. (*Commercial Appeal*, October 1, 1901. This edition contains the amounts spent on construction yearly from 1896 to 1900. Chamber of Commerce, *Some Economic Factors in the Growth of Memphis, Tennessee.*)
14. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Manufactures, 1914* (Washington, 1916), 1:35, 281, 1452, 1453, 1562. Birmingham's economic growth was so completely founded on the manufacture of iron and steel that it offered few points for comparison with other Southern cities.
15. James T. Grady, ed., *The City of Memphis, Tennessee, and Vicinity and Their Resources* (Memphis, 1907).
16. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *A Report on the Manufactures of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington, 1883), 411; *Census Reports, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900, Manufactures* (Washington, 1903), vol. 8, part 2, p. 858.
17. On the basis of figures supplied by the Memphis Merchant's Exchange, the *Commercial Appeal* in its Choctaw Edition, January 9, 1900, estimated that the lumber industry had increased by 66 per cent since 1896.
18. *Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1900.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Fourteenth Census*, IX, 1442.
21. *Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1900.
22. Chamber of Commerce, *Memphis: Advantages, Resources, and Opportunities it Offers Manufacturers and Distributors* (Memphis, 1921), 20.
23. *Ibid.*, 23-25.
24. *Tenth Census, Manufactures*, 411; *Thirteenth Census*, 9:1190; *Fourteenth Census*, 9:1442.
25. *Thirteenth Census*, 9:1190.
26. *Commercial Appeal*, May 14, 1903.
27. *Thirteenth Census*, 9:1190. Drug manufacturing was mostly of the patent medicine type, aimed at the large market provided by Southerners suffering from ailments referred to in the press as the "spring humors"—a condition which today is recognized as having resulted from vitamin deficiency and malaria.

28. The view that Bourbon capitalists have bartered the South's soul for industry is effectively presented in the essays of Clarence Nixon and Frank Owsley in *Twelve Southerners I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York, 1930).
29. Memphis Merchants Exchange, *The Story of a Great Association* (Memphis, 1948), 3.
30. *Commercial Appeal*, August 7, 1898. In 1910 the Merchants Exchange, jointly with the Memphis Cotton Exchange, built the twenty-story Exchange Building at the corner of Madison and Second Streets.
31. *Commercial Appeal*, February 14, 1900.
32. Grady, *The City of Memphis*, 10.
33. *Commercial Appeal*, July 22, 1900.
34. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1900.
35. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1900.
36. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1900.
37. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1901.
38. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1901.
39. *Résumé of Major Activities and Accomplishments, Memphis Chamber of Commerce, 1900-1934* (Memphis, 1952), 3-4.
40. Missouri Pacific Lines, *Memphis Industrial Map* (St. Louis, 1946).
41. *Commercial Appeal*, September 2, 1906.
42. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1904.
43. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1900.
44. Business Men's Club, *Factory Facts and Figures Demonstrating the Superiority of Memphis as a Manufacturing Center* (Memphis, 1910), 17.
45. *Ibid.*, 19.
46. Chamber of Commerce, *Memphis: Advantages, Resources, and Opportunities* (Memphis, n.d.), 15.
47. Trades and Labor Council, *Labor Day Souvenir* (Memphis, 1914), 2.
48. *Commercial Appeal*, February 8, 1902.
49. *Ibid.*, November 30, 1901.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Commercial Appeal*, March 11, 1898.
52. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1898.
53. *Ibid.*, March 25, 1900.
54. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1909.
55. In 1900 an "extensive North Carolina and Texas cotton mill operator" (*Commercial Appeal*, April 24, 1900) leased for two years the plant of the old Memphis Cotton Mill Company. At the expiration of the two year period the lease was not renewed and the mill was put up for sale. In 1902 a group of Memphis capitalists put up an eight thousand dollar cotton mill, but apparently their efforts ended in failure. Again, in 1909,



a Maine corporation was reported planning a million dollar mill to be located in South Memphis, but nothing came of it.

56. *Commercial Appeal*, February 17, 1898.
57. Capers, in *River Town*, 226, blames the failures on the first two of these factors.
58. *Commercial Appeal*, December 17, 1898.
59. Shields McIlwaine, *Memphis Down in Dixie* (New York, 1948), 280.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Capers, *River Town*, 215.
62. *Commercial Appeal*, January 4, 1900, citing figures from the annual statement of the Cotton Exchange.
63. Chamber of Commerce, *Memphis: Advantages, Resources, and Opportunities*, 29.
64. Capers, *River Town*, 220.
65. See A. H. Garside, *Cotton Goes to Market* (New York, 1935), 103-105. A "spot" broker was one who sold cotton for the dealers on a commission basis rather than buying and selling outright. "F.o.b. men" was a term peculiar to the cotton trade of Memphis. It referred to firms that sold cotton for the country holders to the mill on a commission basis.
66. *Commercial Appeal*, January 8, 1900.
67. *Ibid.*, Choctaw Edition, January 9, 1900. This edition has an article discussing the history and functions of the Cotton Exchange. See also *Annual Cotton Statement, Season 1895-96* (Memphis, 1896), available in Cossitt Library for the years 1895 and 1896 only.
68. *Commercial Appeal*, September 29, 1898.
69. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1910.
70. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1911.
71. Capers, *River Town*, 265. For a more detailed discussion of the Memphis trade area see also Rayburn W. Johnson, "Geographic Influences on the Location and Growth of the City of Memphis," in *Journal of Geography*, 27:85-97 (March, 1928).
72. *Commercial Appeal*, May 14, 1903. Even Brownsville, fifty-eight miles to the north of Memphis, was within the St. Louis trade area. *Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1900.
73. The renown of the Moore Company was hardly as great as that of its founder. Moore was an individualist whose vagaries provided a source of amusement for the Memphis public. He remained a Unionist during the Civil War and afterwards became active in Reconstruction politics. He was elected to Congress on the Republican ticket in 1880, but declined to run for re-election. He adhered to no religious sect because, it was said, he could not find one broad enough. In 1900 the *Commercial Appeal* (January 12) ran an editorial on the "great expectations" held by the people of Memphis at the time of the unveiling of

a statue of "Memphis's most gifted . . . citizen, Hon. Wm. R. Moore." The occasion was somewhat unique in that Colonel Moore was still living and that the statue was his own idea rather than the result of public demand. The pedestal featured "noteworthy lines from the works of Col. Moore."

74. *Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1900.
75. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1904.
76. Capers, *River Town*, 219.
77. Carlton J. Corliss, *Main Lines of Mid-America, the Story of the Illinois Central* (New York, 1950), 329-330. In 1906, when Edward H. Harriman successfully contested Stuyvesant Fish's control of the Illinois Central, Fish was ousted from the presidency after a tenure of nearly twenty years and second vice-president Harahan became his successor.
78. The Harahan Bridge was completed in 1909. The first railroad bridge across the Mississippi at Memphis was opened in 1892.
79. *Commercial Appeal*, January 2, 1901. This edition contains a history and discussion of the functions of the Freight Bureau.
80. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1902.
81. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1901.
82. Business Men's Club, *Factory Facts and Figures*, 30.
83. *Ibid.*, 29.
84. The first waterways convention held in Memphis was in 1845, and was presided over by John C. Calhoun.
85. *Commercial Appeal*, October 6, 1907. The arrival of the president in Memphis was Rooseveltian. Reaching the city aboard the steamer "Lily" from Cairo, Roosevelt was greeted by 25,000 persons who had assembled on the levee. The president saluted Mayor Malone "with a grasp of the hand that almost lifted him from his feet" and "gave him a clap over the shoulder that caused the recipient to wince." A great parade followed, led by mounted police, Neely Zouaves, Company "A" of the Confederate Veterans, and the Forrest Rifles. The parade ended at Court Square where three thousand school children sang "Fourteen Feet Through the Valley," each keeping time by waving an American flag. *Commercial Appeal*, October 4, 1907.
86. *Commercial Appeal*, October 4, 1907.
87. The "of Memphis" was used in the bank's title for the first time in 1916.
88. David H. Tuttle, *Since 1864, the Story of Memphis's Oldest Financial Institution* (Memphis, 1939), 4.
89. Martin O'Callaghan, *The Story of a Memphis Institution 1869-1919* (Memphis, 1919). See also Carey Moffett Moore, comp., *Chronological List of Memphis Banks and Trust Companies* (Memphis, 1948).

In 1929 the "and" was dropped between "Union" and "Planters" in the bank's title, and in 1952 "Trust Company" was removed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. *Commercial Appeal*, January 6, 1898.
2. *Ibid.*, January 7, 1898.
3. John Allison, ed., *Notable Men of Tennessee*, 2:86 (Atlanta, 1905).
4. Idlewild and Madison Heights were both in the Cooper Street area, Idlewild to the south of Union Avenue and Madison Heights to the north.
5. *Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fiftieth General Assembly, Second Session (Nashville, 1899), 53-55.
6. *Commercial Appeal*, September 18, 1898.
7. *Mrs. Charles Jones et al. vs. the City of Memphis*, 101 Tennessee (17 Pickle), 188.
8. The threat of an epidemic aroused such fears that the Board of Health invoked a quarantine of the city.
9. *Commercial Appeal*, August 21, 1898.
10. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1899. "Manila" is today the Glenview district.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-First General Assembly, 1899 (Nashville, 1899), 221; see "Mayor's Annual Message," in Board of Commissioners, *Annual Reports of the City of Memphis For The Year Ending December 31, 1899* (Memphis, 1900).
13. Rayburn W. Johnson, "Land Utilization in Memphis" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, abridged copy, University of Chicago, 1936), 10.
14. In those days health authorities thought that unhygienic conditions *per se* were responsible for epidemics by producing noxious vapors during the summer. A lack of sewers did contribute to the stagnant pools around Memphis, in which mosquitoes, the real but at that time unrecognized culprits, bred. Memphis of the era before sewers has been described as a "cesspool of uncleanness" where "the surrounding streams and the improvised privy vaults had to absorb the garbage and excretions of approximately 50,000 people." David Moss Hilliard, "The Development of Public Education in Memphis, Tennessee, 1848-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1946), 46-47.
15. *Commercial Appeal*, September 8, 1898; see also Young, *History of Memphis*, 198.
16. Artesian water was discovered in Memphis in 1887. In that year the city entered into a contract with the Artesian Water Company, giving it the exclusive right to furnish water to city consumers.

17. "Records of the Legislative Council," February 15, 1899, p. 145, June 13, 1899, p. 234; *Commercial Appeal*, June 14, 1899.
18. *Commercial Appeal*, October 31, 1900, November 13, 1901; see also "Report of the City Engineer," in *Annual Reports of the City of Memphis*, 1899.
19. "Records," May 2, 1902, p. 29.
20. *Commercial Appeal*, July 3, 1902.
21. "Records," November 5, 1902, p. 114.
22. *Ibid.*
23. "Records," May 29, 1903, p. 212; *Commercial Appeal*, November 29, 1902.
24. *Commercial Appeal*, September 21, 1904.
25. *Ibid.*, December 1, 1904.
26. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1899.
27. Allison, *Notable Men*, 2:40.
28. *Commercial Appeal*, March 16, 1903.
29. The Brush patent covered the first successful American technique for large scale generation of electricity.
30. Allison, *Notable Men*, 2:39-40. The Carnes family was noted for the prominent role it played in the city's social life. The daughters, Katherine and Juliet, made impressive debuts, and the family home on Linden Avenue (today the Wellington Health center) was one of the most regal in the city.
31. This was the position taken by the *News Scimitar*. See, for example, the editorial of February 3, 1913.
32. *Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-Fourth General Assembly, 1905 (Nashville, 1905), 336-370.
33. *Commercial Appeal*, June 13, 1900; H. Douglass Hughey, comp., *A Digest of the Laws, Ordinances, and Contracts of the City of Memphis* (Memphis, 1909), 841.
34. *Commercial Appeal*, August 24, 1901.
35. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1903.
36. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1905.
37. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1900. Several years later the *Commercial Appeal* modified its opinion about car operators. In an editorial, January 10, 1903, it complained that the motormen ran the cars as they pleased, "on schedule or off," that they frequently ran by flagging passengers, and that some of the conductors had "a cheerful way of jawing back at the passengers when the latter touched the bell cord."
38. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1903.
39. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1905.
40. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1905.
41. *Ibid.*, December 18, 1902.

42. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1902.
43. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1901.
44. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1903.
45. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1903.
46. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities Having a Population of Over 30,000: 1905* (Washington, 1907), 109.
47. *Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-Fifth General Assembly, 1907 (Nashville, 1907), 1147.
48. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 8.
49. *Commercial Appeal*, July 1, 1908.
50. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 7.
51. *Ibid.*, 246.
52. *Commercial Appeal*, March 10, October 11, 1901.
53. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1902; Board of Health, *Twenty-Third Annual Report*, 1901 (Memphis, 1902), 5.
54. *Commercial Appeal*, June 6, 1900.
55. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1906.
56. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1906.
57. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 618; *Commercial Appeal*, December 10, 1908.
58. *Commercial Appeal*, July 28, 1900.
59. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 670; *Commercial Appeal*, July 29, 1900.
60. *Commercial Appeal*, July 7, 1904.
61. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1905.
62. *Ibid.*, January 10, 1899.
63. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1902.
64. *Ibid.*, April 15, 1902.
65. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1904. The year 1899 was particularly disastrous. In addition to the burning of the Gayoso Hotel, which represented a loss of nearly \$1,000,000, fires destroyed the J. S. Menken Company Department Store, the Memphis Paper Company, and the Planters Warehouse, each a loss of over \$100,000.
66. *Ibid.*, July 3, 1902.
67. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities Having a Population of Over 25,000, 1902 and 1903* (Bulletin 20, Washington, 1905), 78.
68. William F. Carroll, *Report of the Chief of the Fire Department To The Fire and Police Commissioners For The Year Ending December 31, 1903* (Memphis, n.d.), 5.
69. *Commercial Appeal*, November 1, 1903.
70. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1903.
71. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1905.
72. February 13, 1906.

73. All the facts pertaining to the early history of the Memphis Park system were taken from Young, *History of Memphis*, 323-329.
74. Quoted in L. B. McFarland, *Early History of the Memphis Park System* (Memphis, n.d.), 3.
75. *Ibid.*, 8.
76. *Acts*, Fifty-First General Assembly, 1899, pp. 954-960.
77. "Records," July 5, 1900, pp. 406-408.
78. *Commercial Appeal*, October 11, 1900.
79. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1899.
80. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1900.
81. *Ibid.*, December 1, 1900.
82. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1901.
83. "Records," November 30, 1900, p. 451.
84. *Commercial Appeal*, January 16, 1901.
85. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1902.
86. Young, *History of Memphis*, 331.
87. *Ibid.*, 332-333.
88. *Commercial Appeal*, September 16, 1906.
89. Annual report of the Memphis Park Commission in the *Commercial Appeal*, January 10, 1909.
90. *Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-Sixth General Assembly, 1909 (Nashville, 1909), 494; *Commercial Appeal*, April 9, 1909.
91. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 109.
92. *Commercial Appeal*, April 10, 1906.
93. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1906.
94. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1906, March 30, 1910.
95. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1904. The *Commercial Appeal* records that on September 4, 1904, some 4,000 people attended the final concert of the season at Overton Park.
96. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1910.
97. Galloway's views on a Negro park were made public in a letter to the *Commercial Appeal*, February 14, 1911.
98. Galloway made no mention of how the Negroes were to get to President's Island. Possibly they were expected to swim to it.
99. *Commercial Appeal*, March 4, 1911.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, April 5, 1911.
102. *News Scimitar*, April 23, 1913.
103. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1913.
104. The remark, coupled with a compliment that Williams was "the best Mayor Memphis has ever had," was made by John T. Walsh when Williams left office in 1905. See *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 7.

## CHAPTER FIVE

1. Interview with J. C. Starnes, August 4, 1952.
2. Quoted in *Commercial Appeal*, May 3, 1905.
3. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1905.
4. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1898.
5. Interview with J. C. Starnes, August 4, 1952.
6. *Commercial Appeal*, March 17, 1902.
7. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1899.
8. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1910.
9. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 76. Fall River, Massachusetts, a city of comparable size, had 100 saloons; Birmingham had 125, and Atlanta had 90.
10. On the character of Memphis saloons see *Commercial Appeal* editorials on December 12, 1901, April 13, 1902, November 18, 1905, May 19, November 6, 1911.
11. *Ibid.*, December 16, 22, 1906.
12. *Ibid.*, June 30, 1909.
13. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1901.
14. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1905.
15. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1905.
16. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1900.
17. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1903.
18. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1900.
19. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1905.
20. *Ibid.*, May 31, 1901.
21. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1909.
22. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 68.
23. *Commercial Appeal*, January 1, 1907.
24. *Ibid.*, August 11, 1910.
25. Andrew A. Bruce and Thomas S. Fitzgerald, "A Study of Crime in the City of Memphis, Tennessee," in *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 19, no. 2, part 2, p. 14 (August, 1928).
26. *Ibid.*, 3, 14.
27. "More Murders Than Ever," in *Literary Digest*, 56:18 (January 19, 1918). Much of this article is based on Hoffman's work.
28. Bruce and Fitzgerald, "A Study of Crime in the City of Memphis," 15. This work, on page 27, indicates 70 per cent of the homicides in the years 1920-1925 were committed by Negroes. Figures are not available for the earlier years, but they can be assumed to have been about the same in proportion.

29. In 1916, 36 per cent of the Memphis population was Negro and the city's murder rate per 100,000 population was 89.9, while Charleston, with more than 50 per cent Negroes in its population, had a murder rate of only 23.1. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Estimates of Population of the United States, 1910-1917*, Bulletin 138 (Washington, 1918) 46-49, and "More Murders than Ever," in *Literary Digest*.
30. Bruce and Fitzgerald, "A Study of Crime in the City of Memphis," 15-16.
31. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 163.
32. *Commercial Appeal*, January 21, 1912.
33. These observations on the characteristics of suicide are drawn from a compilation of the causes and location of suicides, reported in the *Commercial Appeal*, 1905-1906. These conditions persisted through this period of Memphis history.
34. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1913.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Interview with Oldtimer, September 5, 1952.
37. *Commercial Appeal*, November 11, 1913.
38. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1913.
39. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1915.
40. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1911.
41. Haggerty, Deggs, and Honan were the principal assailants in the famous DeSoto Street murders of July 11, 1904.
42. *Commercial Appeal*, editorials, July 16, 1904, November 18, 1905.
43. *Ibid.*, January 4, 1898.
44. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1908.
45. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1908.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, editorial, May 24, 1912.
48. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1913, January 12, 1915.
49. Boyce House, *Cub Reporter* (Dallas, 1947), 101.
50. *Commercial Appeal*, April 22, 1908.
51. This account of the end of Latura's career is taken from House, *Cub Reporter*, 119.
52. *Commercial Appeal*, July 28, 1898.
53. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1909.
54. *Ibid.*, August 31, 1902.
55. The election of Moss came after a bitter contest with Julius T. DuBose. In view of the fact that DuBose had once been judge of the Criminal Court, but had been impeached and convicted by the Senate of the Tennessee Legislature, the *Commercial Appeal* (March 23, 1902) asserted that the election was "a fight for decency as against that which is vi-



- cious . . . and corrupt." The *Evening Scimitar* supported DuBose because it could not abide Moss' doubtful loyalty to the Democratic Party.
56. *Commercial Appeal*, September 19, 1906.
  57. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1909.
  58. *Ibid.*
  59. Galloway's "migratory" magistrates were those elected from county districts who moved their offices to Memphis in order to develop more lucrative rackets. The *Commercial Appeal* in an editorial of December 1, 1910, described the activities of "fee-grabbing" magistrates as the "greatest form of oppression among . . . defenseless people in this community." It was not an uncommon occurrence for a group of Negroes to be induced to break the law and then be herded into a magistrate's court where they were fined exorbitantly.
  60. *Commercial Appeal*, January 11, 1911.
  61. Interview with L. D. Bejach, judge of the Chancery Court of Shelby County, August 15, 1952. Chancellor Bejach relates that one of the charges made against Edgington at the time of his impeachment was that Edgington was found to be in contempt of himself. Edgington's court issued an injunction ordering the closing of saloons, the consequences, so far as patrons were concerned, being that they were inconvenienced only to the extent of having to use the rear door instead of the front. Edgington, it was revealed, was a rear door patron of one of the saloons whose closure he had enjoined.
  62. *Commercial Appeal*, April 18, 1902.
  63. *Ibid.*, August 6, 1906.
  64. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1909.
  65. *Ibid.*, April 12, 1902, April 4, 1906.
  66. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 71.
  67. *Commercial Appeal*, February 10, 1899.
  68. Annual report of the police department in the *Commercial Appeal*, July 16, 1903; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Cities, 1902-1903* (Bulletin 20, 1905), 71.
  69. Board of Commissioners, *Annual Reports of the City of Memphis for the Year Ending December 31, 1907* (Memphis, n.d.), 54-55.
  70. *Commercial Appeal*, September 2, 1902.
  71. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1904. See below, pp. 132-136, on the politics of the move against Mason.
  72. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1903.
  73. *Ibid.*, February 10, 1909.
  74. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1906. At this time John T. Walsh was vice-mayor in the Malone administration. He and his brother Anthony headed a fac-

tion in Memphis politics that rested principally on the support of the city's Irish.

75. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1907.

76. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1902.

77. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1914.

#### CHAPTER SIX

1. *Commercial Appeal*, May 7, 1907.
2. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1909. This edition contained a history of the playground movement in Memphis.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Press Scimitar*, May 12, 1944.
5. *Commercial Appeal*, June 21, 1908, July 11, 1909.
6. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1903, April 14, 1907, October 28, November 28, 1909. A Negro Y.M.C.A. was chartered in 1902, and in 1906 members of the Jewish community, headed by David Gensburger and Hardwig Peres, organized the Young Men's Hebrew Association. The Young Woman's Christian Association had its beginning in an organization called the Young Woman's Club, founded in 1918 to do war work.
7. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1898.
8. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1900.
9. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1902.
10. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1903.
11. *Ibid.*, April 29, May 3, 1903.
12. *Ibid.*, August 14, November 29, 1903.
13. *Ibid.*, October 13, 1903.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Since the records of the County Court were not made available to me, most of the information for this account had to be obtained from the press and from interviews with J. F. Dudney, chairman of the County Court, and Mrs. E. W. Hale, whose father, A. G. Kimbrough, was chairman of the court at the time of the reformatory's founding.
16. *Commercial Appeal*, July 23, 1909.
17. Edward B. Klewer, *The Memphis Digest*, 1931 (Memphis, 1931), 89-94; interview with E. H. Crump, December 8, 1952.
18. Information furnished by Judge Elizabeth McCain, of the Juvenile Court.
19. *Commercial Appeal*, May 4, 1898.
20. *Ibid.*, July 17, 1909.
21. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1900, April 3, 1904.
22. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1900. This edition featured a history of the Nineteenth Century Club.

23. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1900. Beginning in 1896 the Club held its meetings in the Lyceum Theatre building, but in March, 1900, it bought the LaSalette Academy, a three-story stone and brick structure on Third Street near Poplar. Some of the rooms were fitted out for study groups, while others were used for whist and tea. There was also a gymnasium with "a ladies bowling alley."
24. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1899.
25. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1913. Women's clubs of other types also flourished. In a city where the traditions of the Confederacy remained vibrant, it was natural that there were chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The groups heard papers read on Confederate heroes and sought to further all things commemorating either the tradition and leaders of the Old South or its war for independence. The April 3, 1904, edition of the *Commercial Appeal* contains a history of the Memphis chapter of the U.D.C.

Another women's group, the Housekeeper's Club, provides an interesting commentary on the use of leisure by some of the women of Memphis. Organized in 1904, its objective was that of importing Irish girls to serve as domestic help because of the "notorious inefficiency of negro help." One of the members had a sister who knew the Protestant pastor in County Longford, and it was thought that through him Irish girls could be induced to come to Memphis. This idea provided enough material for reports for several meetings. Irish girls were recommended as "jewels of docility" who undoubtedly would "jump at a chance to come to America, in particular to Memphis," since they would be guaranteed a weekly stipend of \$3. The girls were to pay their own way over. The women of the Housekeeper's Club showed a keen insight into the psychology of contented domestic help. After the girls arrived in Memphis they were to be given "social solidarity" by having a club of their own "under the auspices and oversight" of the Housekeeper's Club, "with the privilege of wearing initialed buttons after passing initiatory ordeals."

26. *Commercial Appeal*, December 17, 1908, May 4, 1909.
27. Harriet I. McDonald, comp., *Memphis Sunshine* (Memphis, 1903).
28. The organization was known as the Women's Christian Association prior to 1896. It had no connection with the national Y.W.C.A.
29. Women's and Young Women's Christian Association, *History—By Laws* (Memphis, 1952), 4-5; *Commercial Appeal*, November 19, 1905, December 13, 1908.
30. The Nineteenth Century Club entertained woman suffrage speakers as early as 1898. In 1900 Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, the noted women's suffrage evangelist, addressed a state women's suffrage convention at

- the Grand Opera House on Fourth Street. *Commercial Appeal*, March 17, 1898, April 23, 1900.
31. *Commercial Appeal*, April 26, 1903.
  32. *Ibid.*, April 26, 1914, May 3, 1914. Mrs. Pittman's speech in Court Square was probably the first one made there since Carrie Nation's memorable appearance in 1902.
  33. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1914.
  34. David Moss Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis Tennessee, 1848-1945* (Chicago, 1946), 88.
  35. W. F. Walker and Dorothy F. Holland, *Survey of Health Problems and Facilities in Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee, for the Year 1929* (Memphis, 1930), 11.
  36. Quoted in *ibid.*, 11.
  37. In 1903 the city had four incinerators. About eighty tons of refuse were burned daily during the winter and about 130 tons daily during the summer. The peak came in August when fifty tons of watermelon rinds were added to the normal load. *Commercial Appeal*, March 22, 1903.
  38. *Commercial Appeal*, May 29, 1905.
  39. S. P. Walker, comp., *Digest of The Acts Repealing the Charters of Certain Municipal Corporations; The Proclamation of the Governor Thereon; The Acts Establishing Taxing Districts and Amendments Thereof, And The Ordinances of the City of Memphis* (5th ed., Memphis, 1898), 179.
  40. *Commercial Appeal*, June 23, 1902.
  41. Board of Commissioners, *Annual Reports of the City of Memphis*, 1907, p. 265.
  42. *Commercial Appeal*, August 22, 1901.
  43. *Ibid.*
  44. Walker and Holland, *Survey of Health Problems and Facilities in Memphis*, 14.
  45. *Commercial Appeal*, July 9, 1911.
  46. Quoted in the *Commercial Appeal*, July 16, 1911.
  47. *Commercial Appeal*, July 19, 1911; City Commission, *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government* (Memphis, 1911).
  48. *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government*.
  49. Walker and Holland, *Survey of Health Problems and Facilities in Memphis*, 14.
  50. *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government*.
  51. At the turn of the century Memphis was the site of the famous James' Old Homestead Sanatorium. This institution specialized in the treatment of drink and drug addiction. In 1904 the sanatorium was moved to the Raleigh Inn, at Raleigh, Tennessee, a resort center some fifteen miles from Memphis. Beginning in 1904 the Old Homestead Sanatorium be-

- gan to hold a yearly reunion for "old grads" of which there were an estimated twelve thousand. *Commercial Appeal*, June 5, 1904.
52. St. Joseph's Hospital, *Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee of St. Joseph's Hospital, 1889-1914*, (Memphis, 1914).
  53. Board of Health, *Twentieth Annual Report*, 1898 (Memphis, 1899), 5.
  54. *Commercial Appeal*, December 24, 1909.
  55. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1912.
  56. Board of Health, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 1902 (Memphis, 1904), 14.
  57. *Commercial Appeal*, July 20, 1909.
  58. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1909.
  59. *Ibid.*
  60. Associated Charities, *Third Annual Report, 1913-1914* (Memphis, 1915), 14; *Commercial Appeal*, May 31, 1914.
  61. *News Scimitar*, February 7, 1913.
  62. *Commercial Appeal*, February 9, September 7, 1906.
  63. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1914.
  64. The city's health record cannot be measured precisely by vital statistics of the period, which are not too reliable and which indicate no clear pattern. The best available measure of the city's health record lies in the steps taken to improve it.
  65. Associated Charities, *Fourth Annual Report, 1914-1915* (Memphis, n.d.), 5.
  66. *Commercial Appeal*, October 28, 1900.
  67. *Ibid.*
  68. Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis*, 56-57.
  69. *Commercial Appeal*, September 13, 1898.
  70. *Ibid.*, September 11, January 16, 1906.
  71. *Ibid.*, December 23, 1909. An attempt to effect instructional uniformity in Tennessee was made by the State Legislature in 1900 by passing a uniform textbook law. For two years the Memphis school board refused to adopt the state's selections because it would mean a retreat from the principle of home rule. It was also argued that the Johnson reader, used locally, was of higher merit than the state Stickney series because the former "devoted its space to a large extent to the product of Southern writers," while the state texts harbored the danger of "impressing Northern matter upon the mind of a child." *Commercial Appeal*, February 11, 1902. The *Commercial Appeal* (July 18, 1900) saw the issue as one of having "a lot of yaps and yokels from the sagebrush . . . telling Memphis what sort of books must be used." It was, said the paper, evidence of the "rampant agrarian spirit that seeks to crush and destroy whatever of urban excellence it cannot rival." State texts were adopted in 1902.

72. Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis*, 113.
73. *Commercial Appeal*, September 24, 1913.
74. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1913.
75. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1913.
76. Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis*, 82-91.
77. *Commercial Appeal*, December 12, 1911; Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis*, 89.
78. Hilliard, *The Development of Public Education in Memphis*, 89-90.  
 Memphis teachers, in the critical years from 1913 to 1919, were not only underpaid, but suffered undue coercion from the Board of Education in their professional activities. In June, 1914, Miss Cora Ashe, principal of St. Paul's school and Miss Mamie Cain, her assistant, were fired by the Board. Miss Ashe had been with the system, for forty-two years and Miss Cain, fourteen. The reason given for their dismissal was that they had attempted "to create sentiment against an order of the board." *Commercial Appeal*, June 7, 1914. Both teachers had been educational leaders in Memphis, Miss Ashe being the first president of the "Teachers League of Memphis" when it was organized in 1907. Both were instigators of a successful twelve-month salary fight in 1909.  
 The discharge of Miss Ashe and Miss Cain was protested by several women's organizations, including the Nineteenth Century Club. The teachers charged that Mayor Crump was behind the move, that he had threatened to discharge like "so many policemen" certain teachers who opposed him. *Commercial Appeal*, June 9, 1914.  
 At a meeting of the Board of Education at which the interested parties were present, J. P. Norfleet, the Board's president, refused to state reasons for the firings. The highlight of the evening came when Miss Ashe, who had once taught Norfleet, pointed a finger at him and, addressing him as "J.P.," demanded to know why she had been turned out.
79. *Commercial Appeal*, March 28, 1898.
80. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1900.
81. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1902.
82. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1902.
83. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1908.
84. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1908.
85. *Ibid.*, May 31, 1908.
86. A sequel to the bitterness of the election was the assassination of Carmack on November 9, 1908, on the streets of Nashville. The shooting was done by the son of Duncan B. Cooper after Carmack had written a series of editorials in a Nashville paper attacking the political activities of the elder Cooper.
87. *Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1909.
88. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1909.

89. *Acts*, Fifty-Sixth General Assembly, 1909, pp. 2-3.
90. Patterson and his friends charged that this episode was the result of a plot on the part of a desperate political opposition. The former governor claimed, and it is a claim to which some credence has been given, that he had been drugged and then "planted" in a house of prostitution.
91. *Commercial Appeal*, November 13, 1913.
92. *Ibid.*, February 9, 1914.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. *Commercial Appeal*, November 12, 1901.
2. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1902.
3. *Ibid.*, March 9, 1903.
4. *Ibid.*, March 2, 1903, quoting the *Atlanta Journal*.
5. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1903.
6. *Ibid.*, March 12, 1903.
7. Walker Wellford, *Report to the Citizens of Memphis* (Memphis, 1904), 1-2.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 2.
10. *Morning News*, October 14, 1903.
11. Wellford, *Report*, 1.
12. Interview with Walker Wellford, September 15, 1952.
13. National Audit Company, *Report on Examination of Books of Account of City of Memphis, Tennessee, 1898-1902* (St. Louis, 1903), 1.
14. *Commercial Appeal*, August 7, 1903.
15. National Audit Company, *Report*, 8.
16. *Morning News*, November 8, 1903.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1903.
19. Interview with Wellford, September 15, 1952.
20. Interview with Wellford, September 15, 1952.
21. *Morning News*, December 19, 24, 1903.
22. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1904.
23. *Commercial Appeal*, January 8, 1904.
24. *Morning News*, January 8, 1904.
25. *Commercial Appeal*, January 8, 1904.
26. Interview with Walker Wellford, September 15, 1952.
27. *Morning News*, January 22, 1904.
28. *Commercial Appeal*, February 3, 1904.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1904.
31. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1904.

32. *Ibid.*
33. *Morning News*, February 7, 1904; *Commercial Appeal*, February 7, 1904.
34. *Commercial Appeal*, February 7, 1904.
35. *Ibid.*, February 12, 1904.
36. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1904.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1904.
40. *Morning News*, July 12, 1904.
41. *Commercial Appeal*, July 13, 1904.
42. *Morning News*, July 12, 1904.
43. *Commercial Appeal*, July 13, 1904.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Interview with Wellford, September 15, 1952. See p. 95, above.
46. *Commercial Appeal*, July 16, 1904.
47. *Ibid.*, July 17, 1904.
48. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, pp. 2-3.
49. *Commercial Appeal*, July 17, 1904.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Morning News*, July 19, 1904.
52. *Commercial Appeal*, July 21, 1904.
53. *News Scimitar*, January 15, 1905.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Acts*, Fifty-Fourth General Assembly, 1905, p. 546.
56. *Ibid.*, 99-113.
57. *Commercial Appeal*, June 18, 1905.
58. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1905.
59. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1905.
60. Primary elections were held in Shelby County as early as 1898. While the primary is distinctively progressive, its use in the South was to exclude the Negro from a participation in the politics of the Democratic Party. Yet "voting" the Negro in Memphis was a custom so time honored that simply making primaries white could not stop the practice.
61. *Commercial Appeal*, September 23, 1905.
62. *Ibid.*, October 17, 1905.
63. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1905. As it turned out, the Fourth Ward did go to the anti-administration faction, and shortly after the election the Memphis Theatre, a shady resort operated in connection with the Turf Saloon, expanded its operations. The *Commercial Appeal* (November 18, 1905) charged that permission to expand was Haggerty's reward for having carried the Fourth Ward.
64. *News Scimitar*, October 5, 1905.



65. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1905.
66. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1905.
67. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1905.
68. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1905.
69. *Commercial Appeal*, November 10, 1905.
70. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1906.
71. Allison, *Notable Men*, 2:63-64; Bench and Bar of Memphis, *Memorial* (Memphis, 1935), 298-301.
72. *Commercial Appeal*, February 28, March 27, 1906.
73. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1906.
74. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1903. The *Commercial Appeal* customarily printed in full the annual reports of the police department.
75. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1907.
76. *Ibid.*, July 31, 1906.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Acts*, Fifty-Fourth General Assembly, 1905, p. 731; Young, *History of Memphis*, 264.
79. *Commercial Appeal*, February 16, 1906.
80. *Memphis Digest*, 1909, p. 7.
81. Young, *History of Memphis*, 270.
85. *Ibid.*, 271.
86. *Commercial Appeal*, November 15, 1906, January 16, 1909.
87. *Acts*, Fifty-Sixth General Assembly, 1909, p. 619; *Commercial Appeal*, March 13, 1909.
88. *Commercial Appeal*, June 20, 1906.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth of the United States, 1852-1933* (New York, 1937), 319.
2. C. W. Heiskell, comp., *Digest of the Acts Repealing The Charters of Certain Municipal Corporations; the Acts Establishing Taxing Districts and the Ordinances of the Taxing Districts, And the Ordinances of the Taxing District of Shelby County, Tennessee* (Memphis, 1879), 2-11. See also L. D. Bejach, "The Taxing District of Shelby County," *The West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, 4:14 (1950). Bejach asserts (p. 27) that "It must be apparent . . . that the Taxing District of Shelby County . . . and not the Galveston experiment of 1901, was the origin of commission form of government in the United States."
3. *Commercial Appeal*, April 19, 1901.
4. See above, pp. 139-140.
5. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1905.
6. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1906.

7. *News Scimitar*, October 30, 1906. A "ripper" bill was a name given by its opponents to a bill that would effect a drastic reorganization of a city government by an enactment of the State Legislature.
8. *Commercial Appeal*, October 26, 1906.
9. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1906.
10. *News Scimitar*, October 30, 1906.
11. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1906. Malone, presuming to frustrate an attempt by the police to control the elections, personally assumed charge of the police department and assigned policemen to the polls. Chief O'Haver opposed the mayor and was promptly suspended. A sergeant on the force was appointed chief, and he and Malone spent election day riding around the city in a buggy and suspending all policemen who remained loyal to O'Haver.
12. *Commercial Appeal*, February 7, 1907.
13. *Acts*, Fifty-Fourth General Assembly, 1907, p. 566; *Commercial Appeal*, March 16, 1907.
14. *Commercial Appeal*, May 5, 1907.
15. *Ibid.*, April 24, May 5, 1907.
16. *Malone vs. Williams*, 118 Tennessee, 365.
17. *Commercial Appeal*, June 23, 1907.
18. *Ibid.*, April 26, July 5, 1908.
19. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1908.
20. *Acts*, Fifty-Sixth General Assembly, 1909, p. 108.

#### CHAPTER NINE

1. Jonathan Daniels, "He Suits Memphis," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 211:23 (June 10, 1939).
2. *Ibid.*, 48.
3. *Commercial Appeal*, September 21, 1907.
4. *Ibid.*, January 3, 1908.
5. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1908.
6. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1908.
7. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1908.
8. *Ibid.*, January 22, 1909.
9. *Ibid.*, August 22, November 3, 1909.
10. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1909. Crump's strength was in the suburbs, while Williams' was in the older part of the city.
11. Crump took office just after the completion of the Shelby County Court House. The idea of a new public building to house both city and county offices had been under discussion since 1900. The initial step was taken in 1905, when the State Legislature passed an act enabling the county to float a million-dollar bond issue to build the proposed court house. Plans

for the structure were drawn by Hale and Rogers, New York architects. Occupying a whole city block, it was completed in 1909. The exterior was finished in white stone and adorned with rows of marble columns on all four sides. At its main entrance on Adams Street were six heroic size statues carved from solid marble, representing Authority, Liberty, Justice, Wisdom, Integrity, and Peace.

12. *Commercial Appeal*, October 31, 1909, quoting the report submitted by the Bureau of Municipal Research to the City Club.
13. *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government*.
14. *News Scimitar*, May 17, 1913.
15. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1913.
16. *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government*.
17. Luke E. Wright, in addition to being one of the city's foremost members of the legal profession, had a distinguished career in the foreign service during the administrations of Roosevelt and Taft. In 1901, he was appointed by Roosevelt as a member of the Philippine Commission and in August, 1903, he succeeded Taft as Governor General of the Philippines. In 1906, Wright was named ambassador to Japan and in 1908, he served briefly as Secretary of War when Taft resigned that post.
18. *News Scimitar*, January 25, November 28, December 19, 1913; *One Year and Eight Months Under Commission Government*.
19. The battle between Crump and the local utility concerns did not reach its epic proportions until 1939, when T.V.A. power was brought into the city, and the local companies were forced to sell out on Crump's terms.
20. *Commercial Appeal*, February 10, 1911.
21. *News Scimitar*, February 3, 1913.
22. *Commercial Appeal*, April 9, 1915.
23. Interview with L. D. Bejach, January 2, 1953.
24. *News Scimitar*, July 24, 1913.
25. *Ibid.*
26. This point is also made by Gerald M. Capers, "Memphis: Satrapy of a Benevolent Despot," in Robert S. Allen, ed., *Our Fair City* (New York, 1947), 226.

In his strictures on public service corporations, Crump was talking the kind of language that the progressive era expected of a reformer in politics. In a telephone conversation with the author in 1952 he related with considerable feeling how he had once observed Mayor Williams at a theatrical production at the Lyceum Theatre flanked on one side by the president of the Memphis Street Railway System and on the other by one of the officials of the light company. In his opinion this was symbolic of the way that Williams had been caught in the toils of the corporate interests.

27. *Commercial Appeal*, February 16, 1908.
28. *Ibid.*, April 12, 1911.
29. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1902, April 1, 1914.
30. *History of the Memphis Fire Department, 1829-1945* (Memphis, 1945). The last steam pumper to be acquired by the city was the "E. H. Crump," purchased in 1911. It is now preserved as an historical exhibit in a glass building at Overton Park. The machine remains in good mechanical condition and was used advantageously during the flood of 1937-38.
31. *Commercial Appeal*, March 1, 1911.
32. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1910.
33. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1911.
34. *Ibid.*, March 28, 1910.
35. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1910.
36. *News Scimitar*, February 11, 1913. Crump was too new in public office and Galloway too firmly entrenched in the park commission for the mayor to have ousted Galloway. The technique apparently used by Crump in this situation was one of attrition. Abe Goodman, a Crump member of the commission, so frequently challenged Galloway's policies that Galloway resigned in 1916.
37. *Commercial Appeal*, August 25, 1911.
38. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1914.
39. *Ibid.*, February 5, 1911, January 10, 1915.
40. The opposition of the *Commercial Appeal* to Crump was most forcefully stated in Mooney's editorials. It was not a popular cause, and in 1914 Crump supporters attempted to boycott the paper. It was charged by them that the *Commercial Appeal* represented the interest of certain selfish corporations. It is true that the owners of the paper had represented in their number some of the city's older and more solidly entrenched business leaders. Luke E. Wright, for example, had an interest in the *Commercial Appeal*, and was, at the same time, an attorney for the traction company.
41. *Commercial Appeal*, August 22, 1911.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1911.
44. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1911.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1913.
47. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1911.
48. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1914.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1914.
51. *Ibid.*, July 17, 19, 25, August 5, 1914.

52. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1914.
53. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1914.
54. *News Scimitar*, August 1, 1914.
55. McIlwaine, *Memphis Down in Dixie*, 375.
56. *Ibid.*, 376.
57. *Commercial Appeal*, August 7, 1914.
58. *Ibid.*, February 11, 1910.
59. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1912.
60. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1913.
61. *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-Eighth General Assembly, 1913 (Nashville, 1913), 665-666.
62. *Commercial Appeal*, March 2, 1914.
63. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1914.
64. In the race for the governorship in 1914, the Democrats adopted Hooper's tactics of 1912, and made the enforcement of the prohibition law the principal plank in their platform. The plan was successful, for Rye was elected over Hooper.
65. *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee*, Fifty-Ninth General Assembly, 1915 (Jackson, Tennessee, 1915), 22.
66. Also included in the ouster suit were R. A. Utley, vice-mayor; O. H. Perry, inspector of police; William Stanton, judge; and J. A. Riechman, sheriff.
67. *Commercial Appeal*, October 30, November 2, 1915.
68. *Ibid.*, October 30, 1915.
69. In the mayoralty election of 1915, Crump had no opposition except the candidate of the Socialist Party. The latter received five hundred votes, many of which were doubtless cast as a protest against Crump.
70. *Commercial Appeal*, February 13, 1916.
71. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1916. Crump's supporters have incorporated into the body of Crump apologetics the assertion that the real power behind Crump's ouster in 1916 was the Merchants Light and Power Company. Fearful that the mayor would bring about public ownership of power, the company corruptly influenced the State Legislature into passing the ouster law. Apparently the utility company connived at the ouster, but basically, Crump was forced out of office for his refusal to enforce the prohibition law, and his refusal to do so was grounded in nothing more sinister than his unwillingness to take seriously a law whose enforcement could only be a farce in Memphis.
72. Andrew J. Hays, Jr., "Tennessee's Ed Crump, A Study of his Life and Career" (Senior Thesis Submitted to the Department of History, Princeton University, 1953), 12.
73. *Commercial Appeal*, November 2, 1915.
74. Some of these ideas have appeared in the author's "The Progressive

Movement in Memphis," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 15:2-16 (March, 1956).

#### CHAPTER TEN

1. *Commercial Appeal*, May 21, 1905.
2. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1907.
3. *Thirteenth Census*, 1, 82.
4. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Estimates of Population of the United States, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915* (Bulletin 133, Washington, 1916), 31. *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Population*, 1:78 (Washington, 1923).
5. *Thirteenth Census*, 1:82.
6. *Thirteenth Census*, 1:77. The *Commercial Appeal* (December 13, 1910) was particularly galled by Atlanta's surpassing Memphis. The blame was placed on the Memphis city government for having failed to extend the city's limits. But this extension would not have improved the city's status, since Memphis had only 44,078 persons living within ten miles of the city's bounds, whereas Atlanta had 53,445 in a similar area.
7. *Commercial Appeal*, July 19, 1910.
8. Cannon Hannay, "Through Irish Eyes," in *Everybody's Magazine*, 30:488-489 (April, 1914). While impressed with the city's new character, Hannay also detected "a certain suavity" about Memphis life which he thought could be traced to European and Old South origins.
9. *Commercial Appeal*, July 2, August 21, 1909, June 5, 1910, April 25, 1914.
10. The first concrete steps toward providing the city with a union depot were not taken until 1903. In that year a committee was organized with the backing of George Gould, president of the Missouri Pacific and Iron Mountain railroads. For six years plans for the proposed building were discussed but each time a site was proposed by the committee it was rejected by the city. An agreement was reached in 1909.
11. *Commercial Appeal*, June 27, 1909. The paper's use of the word "lid" was in reference to the state prohibition law of 1909.
12. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1909; Louise Gambill, *John Gaston, Citizen* (Memphis, 1941), 10. Both Henry Luehrman and John Gaston had come to Memphis immediately after the Civil War, and both entered the restaurant business, later combining their restaurants with hotels. In the eighties and nineties both establishments performed the service of tempering the rawness of Memphis life with a touch of old world graciousness.

The most famous of the old landmarks to suffer destruction in the years immediately preceding the first World War was the old Bell Tavern, located on Front Street near Auction. According to tradition

it was here that the city's proprietors assembled in 1819 to discuss plans for building Memphis. In the 1820's the tavern enjoyed a degree of renown under the proprietorship of Paddy Meagher. Paddy's little daughter, Sally, was a favorite of General Jackson's and would sit on his knee when he visited the tavern. As Sally developed into womanhood she enlarged her reputation by sitting on a variety of knees. In 1824 the Bell Tavern was visited by General LaFayette in company with Fanny Wright, and it was here that Davy Crockett "pulled off one of the greatest drunks that ever happened on the Chickasaw Bluffs." *Commercial Appeal*, October 11, 1914. After 1834 the tavern lost its reputation for wholesomeness and "became a den for thieves and debauchery." In 1914 a building inspector with no feeling for history condemned the building.

13. *Commercial Appeal*, July 27, 1911. The impression of change, so prominent at the end of the first decade of the new century, was heightened by the passing of a number of persons who had been prominent in the business and civic affairs of the city in the years following the Civil War. Napoleon Hill, the prince of cotton factors, died in 1909, as did William R. Moore, who came to Memphis during the reconstruction era to found the city's largest wholesale drygoods house. General George Gordon, the last of the Confederate generals in Congress and for many years the head of the Memphis school system, died in 1911 with the exclamation on his lips, "Send other couriers, those may be killed." *Commercial Appeal*, August 1, 1911. The same year brought to a close the career of T. J. Latham, one of the leaders in the reconstruction of the city after the fever epidemic of 1878 and thereafter the president of the city's water company. The year 1912 marked the passing of Robert R. Church, the famous Negro capitalist and leader in the city's Republican politics. John Gaston died the same year at the age of eighty-four, leaving a fortune that in part was used as a basis for the construction of John Gaston Hospital.
14. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1910, December 30, 1913.
15. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1909.
16. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1908.
17. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1912.
18. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1911.
19. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1906.
20. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1910.
21. *Ibid.*, February 1, 1908.
22. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1908.
23. *Commercial Appeal*, March 30, 1909; Lyceum Theatre, *Programs*, 1901-1913 (Memphis, n.d.). Of the city's several theaters the Lyceum usually had the best in theatrical entertainments. The first Lyceum was

built at the corner of south Third and Union Avenue in 1890 and was dedicated by Julia Marlow in "Romeo and Juliet." In 1893 this structure burned, but was replaced by a new building at Jefferson and Third, "the costliest place of amusement ever built South of the Ohio River, and in many respects the handsomest theatre in America." *Commercial Appeal*, November 22, 1908. The Auditorium at Main and Linden was remodeled in 1904 and renamed the Bijou. Thereafter it was used primarily for musical comedy. The Jefferson on Madison was used for stock shows and vaudeville.

24. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1909.
25. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1909.
26. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1911.
27. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1913.
28. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1912.
29. *News Scimitar*, February 10, 1913.
30. The *Commercial Appeal's* concern with declining moral standards in entertainment could place the whole subject in an improper perspective. Judged by today's standards, the entertainment of the progressive era was wonderfully uplifting. Grand opera companies, featuring such stars as Emma Calve, Ernestine Schumann-Heink and Jessie Nordica, played successfully in Memphis. Light opera, too, enjoyed a considerable vogue. At the turn of the century the most popular production had been *The Bohemian Girl*, but in 1907 the operettas of Victor Herbert were much performed. In that year hundreds went to Charles Dillingham's production of Herbert's *Mlle Modiste* to hear Fritz Scheff sing "Kiss Me Again." The following year *The Red Mill* was brought to Memphis with its appealing "Because You're You," and in 1911 Victor Herbert brought his orchestra to the Lyceum Theatre. Band concerts were also widely attended, although after 1905 Memphis had no further opportunities to play host to the great Creatore, the Italian band leader who had set the city "wild with his earnestness and the grandeur of his music" and who had "entered into the work of conducting with an ardor and agility never before witnessed." *Commercial Appeal*, January 25, 1903.
31. *News Scimitar*, July 1, 1914.
32. Raine's defalcations were revealed when the Mercantile Bank of Memphis closed its doors on February 8, 1914. As president of the bank, Raine had lost over \$1,000,000 of the bank's money by speculation on cotton futures.
33. *Commercial Appeal*, September 9, 1914.
34. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1914.
35. James H. Curry, "Memphis Life During the First World War," (Paper read before the West Tennessee Historical Society, May 5, 1951), 4.



36. *Commercial Appeal*, July 15, 1917.
37. Curry, "Memphis Life During the First World War," 5.
38. *Commercial Appeal*, August 29, 1914.
39. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1914.
40. Curry, "Memphis Life During the First World War," 7.
41. *Commercial Appeal*, May 30, 1916.
42. Curry, "Memphis Life During the First World War," 9.
43. *Commercial Appeal*, February 4, 1917.
44. *Ibid.*, April 3, 1917.
45. A quotation from Randolph Bourne in Lewis Mumford, "The Pragmatic Acquiescence," *Pragmatism and American Culture in Problems in American Civilization* (Boston, 1950), 48.
46. The account of the lynching has been taken from the *Commercial Appeal*, May 22-25, 1917, and the *News Scimitar*, May 23, 1917.
47. *Commercial Appeal*, May 25, 1917.

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